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~~Dr. Chas. M. Gordon,~~

~~Nazubazua, Que.~~

HELENA'S PATH

Helena's Path

By

ANTHONY HOPE

AUTHOR OF DOUBLE HARNESS
TRISTRAM OF BLENT
ETC.

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

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HELENA'S PATH

Dr. Thos. M. Gordon,
Kopenhagen, Den.

Chapter One

AMBROSE, LORD LYNBOROUGH

Common opinion said that Lord Lynborough ought never to have had a peerage and forty thousand a year; he ought to have had a pound a week and a back bedroom in Bloomsbury. Then he would have become an eminent man; as it was, he turned out only a singularly erratic individual.

So much for common opinion. Let no more be heard of its dull utilitarian judgments! There are plenty of eminent men — at the moment, it is believed, no less than seventy Cabinet and ex-Cabinet Ministers (or thereabouts) — to say nothing of Bishops, Judges, and the British Academy, —

and all this in a nook of the world! (And the world too is a point!) Lynborough was something much more uncommon; it is not, however, quite easy to say what. Let the question be postponed; perhaps the story itself will answer it.

He started life — or was started in it — in a series of surroundings of unimpeachable orthodoxy — Eton, Christ Church, the Grenadier Guards. He left each of these schools of mental culture and bodily discipline, not under a cloud — that metaphor would be ludicrously inept — but in an explosion. That, having been thus shot out of the first, he managed to enter the second — that, having been shot out of the second, he walked placidly into the third — that, having been shot out of the third, he suffered no apparent damage from his repeated propulsions — these are matters explicable only

by a secret knowledge of British institutions. His father was strong, his mother came of stock even stronger; he himself — Ambrose Caverly as he then was — was very popular, and extraordinarily handsome in his unusual outlandish style.

His father being still alive — and, though devoted to him, by now apprehensive of his doings — his means were for the next few years limited. Yet he contrived to employ himself. He took a soup-kitchen and ran it; he took a yacht and sank it; he took a public-house, ruined it, and got himself severely fined for watering the beer in the Temperance interest. This injustice rankled in him deeply, and seems to have permanently influenced his development. For a time he forsook the world and joined a sect of persons who called themselves "Theophilanthropists" — and surely no man could

call himself much more than that? Returning to mundane affairs, he refused to pay his rates, stood for Parliament in the Socialist interest, and, being defeated, declared himself a practical follower of Count Tolstoi. His father advising a short holiday, he went off and narrowly escaped being shot somewhere in the Balkans, owing to his having taken too keen an interest in local politics. (He ought to have been shot; he was clear — and even vehement — on that point in a letter which he wrote to *The Times*.) Then he sent for Leonard Stabb, disappeared in company with that gentleman, and was no more seen for some years.

He could always send for Stabb, so faithful was that learned student's affection for him. A few years Ambrose Caverly's senior, Stabb had emerged late and painfully from a humble origin and a local grammar school,

had gone up to Oxford as a non-collegiate man, had gained a first-class and a fellowship, and had settled down to a life of research. Early in his career he became known by the sobriquet of "Cromlech Stabb" — even his unlearned friends would call him "Cromlech" oftener than by any other name. His elaborate monograph on cromlechs had earned him the title; subsequently he extended his researches to other relics of ancient religions — or ancient forms of religion, as he always preferred to put it; "there being," he would add, with the simplicity of erudition beaming through his spectacles on any auditor, orthodox or other, "of course, only one religion." He was a very large stout man; his spectacles were large too. He was very strong, but by no means mobile. Ambrose's father regarded Stabb's companionship as a certain safeguard to his

heir. The validity of this idea is doubtful. Students have so much curiosity — and so many diverse scenes and various types of humanity can minister to that appetite of the mind.

Occasional rumors about Ambrose Caverly reached his native shores; he was heard of in Morocco, located in Spain, familiar in North and in South America. Once he was not heard of for a year; his father and friends concluded that he must be dead — or in prison. Happily the latter explanation proved correct. Once more he and the law had come to loggerheads; when he emerged from confinement he swore never to employ on his own account an instrument so hateful.

"A gentleman should fight his own battles, Cromlech," he cried to his friend. "I did no more than put a bullet in his arm — in a fair encounter — and he let me go to prison!"

"Monstrous!" Stabb agreed with a smile. He had passed the year in a dirty little inn by the prison gate — among scoundrels, but fortunately in the vicinity of some mounds distinctly prehistoric.

Old Lord Lynborough's death occurred suddenly and unexpectedly, at a moment when Ambrose and his companion could not be found. They were somewhere in Peru — Stabb among the Incas, Ambrose probably in less ancient company. It was six months before the news reached them.

"I must go home and take up my responsibilities, Cromlech," said the new Lord Lynborough.

"You really think you'd better?" queried Stabb doubtfully.

"It was my father's wish."

"Oh, well — ! But you'll be thought odd over there, Ambrose."

"Odd? I odd? What the deuce is there odd about me, Cromlech?"

"Everything." The investigator stuck his cheroot back in his mouth.

Lynborough considered dispassionately — as he fain would hope. "I don't see it."

That was the difficulty. Stabb was well aware of it. A man who is odd, and knows it, may be proud, but he will be careful; he may swagger, but he will take precautions. Lynborough had no idea that he was odd; he followed his nature — in all its impulses and in all its whims — with equal fidelity and simplicity. This is not to say that he was never amused at himself; every intelligent observer is amused at himself pretty often; but he did not doubt merely because he was amused. He took his entertainment over his own doings as a bonus life offered. A great

sincerity of action and of feeling was his predominant characteristic.

"Besides, if I'm odd," he went on with a laugh, "it won't be noticed. I'm going to bury myself at Scarsmoor for a couple of years at least. I'm thinking of writing an autobiography. You'll come with me, Cromlech?"

"I must be totally undisturbed," Stabb stipulated. "I've a great deal of material to get into shape."

"There'll be nobody there but myself — and a secretary, I daresay."

"A secretary? What's that for?"

"To write the book, of course."

"Oh, I see," said Stabb, smiling in a slow fat fashion. "You won't write your autobiography yourself?"

"Not unless I find it very engrossing."

"Well, I'll come," said Stabb.

So home they came — an unusual-looking pair — Stabb with his towering bulky frame, his big goggles, his huge head with its scanty black locks encircling a face like a harvest moon — Lynborough, tall, too, but lean as a lath, with tiny feet and hands, a rare elegance of carriage, a crown of chestnut hair, a long straight nose, a waving mustache, a chin pointed like a needle and scarcely thickened to the eye by the close-cropped, short, pointed beard he wore. His bright hazel eyes gleamed out from his face with an attractive restlessness that caught away a stranger's first attention even from the rare beauty of the lines of his head and face; it was regularity over-refined, sharpened almost to an outline of itself. But his appearance tempted him to no excesses of costume; he had always despised that facile path to a barren eccentricity. On every occasion he

wore what all men of breeding were wearing, yet invested the prescribed costume with the individuality of his character: this, it seems, is as near as the secret of dressing well can be tracked.

His manner was not always deemed so free from affectation; it was, perhaps, a little more self-conscious; it was touched with a foreign courtliness, and he employed, on occasions of any ceremony or in intercourse with ladies, a certain formality of speech; it was said of him by an observant woman that he seemed to be thinking in a language more ornate and picturesque than his tongue employed. He was content to say the apt thing, not striving after wit; he was more prone to hide a joke than to tell it; he would ignore a victory and laugh at a defeat; yet he followed up the one and never sat down under the other, unless it were in-

flicted by one he loved. He liked to puzzle, but took no conscious pains to amuse.

Thus he returned to his "responsibilities." Cromlech Stabb was wondering what that dignified word would prove to describe.

Chapter Two

LARGELY TOPOGRAPHICAL

Miss Gilletson had been studying the local paper, which appeared every Saturday and reached Nab Grange on the following morning. She uttered an exclamation, looked up from her small breakfast-table, and called over to the Marchesa's small breakfast-table.

"Helena, I see that Lord Lynborough arrived at the Castle on Friday!"

"Did he, Jennie?" returned the Marchesa, with no show of interest. "Have an egg, Colonel?" The latter words were addressed to her companion at table, Colonel Wenman, a handsome but bald-headed man of about forty.

"'Lord Lynborough, accompanied by his friend Mr. Leonard Stabb, the well-known authority on prehistoric remains, and Mr. Roger Wilbraham, his private secretary. His lordship's household had preceded him to the Castle.'"

Lady Norah Mountliffey — who sat with Miss Gilletson — was in the habit of saying what she thought. What she said now was: "Thank goodness!" and she said it rather loudly.

"You gentlemen haven't been amusing Norah," observed the Marchesa to the Colonel.

"I hoped that I, at least, was engaged on another task — though, alas, a harder one!" he answered in a low tone and with a glance of respectful homage.

"If you refer to me, you've been admirably successful," the Marchesa assured

him graciously — only with the graciousness there mingled that touch of mockery which always made the Colonel rather ill at ease. "Amuse" is, moreover, a word rich in shades of meaning.

Miss Gilletson was frowning thoughtfully. "Helena can't call on him — and I don't suppose he'll call on her," she said to Norah.

"He'll get to know her if he wants to."

"I might call on him," suggested the Colonel. "He was in the service, you know, and that — er — makes a bond. Queer fellow he was, by Jove!"

Captain Irons and Mr. Stillford came in from riding, late for breakfast. They completed the party at table, for Violet Dufaure always took the first meal of the day in bed. Irons was a fine young man, still in the twenties, very fair and very bronzed. He

had seen fighting and was great at polo. Stillford, though a man of peace (if a solicitor may so be called), was by no means inferior in physique. A cadet of a good county family, he was noted in the hunting field and as a long-distance swimmer. He had come to Nab Grange to confer with the Marchesa on her affairs, but, proving himself an acquisition to the party, had been pressed to stay on as a guest.

The men began to bandy stories of Lynborough from one table to the other. Wenman knew the London gossip, Stillford the local traditions: but neither had seen the hero of their tales for many years. The anecdotes delighted Norah Mountliffey, and caused Miss Gilletson's hands to fly up in horror. Nevertheless it was Miss Gilletson who said, "Perhaps we shall see him at church to-day."

"Not likely!" Stillford opined. "And — er — is anybody going?"

The pause which habitually follows this question ensued upon it now. Neither the Marchesa nor Lady Norah would go — they were both of the Old Church. Miss Dufaure was unlikely to go, by reason of fatigue. Miss Gilletson would, of course, go, so would Colonel Wenman — but that was so well known that they didn't speak.

"Any ladies with Lynborough's party, I wonder!" Captain Irons hazarded. "I think I'll go! Stillford, you ought to go to church — family solicitor and all that, eh?"

A message suddenly arrived from Miss Dufaure, to say that she felt better and proposed to attend church — could she be sent?

"The carriage is going anyhow," said Miss Gilletson a trifle stiffly.

"Yes, I suppose I ought," Stillford agreed. "We'll drive there and walk back?"

"Right you are!" said the Captain.

By following the party from Nab Grange to Fillby parish church, a partial idea of the locality would be gained; but perhaps it is better to face the complete task at once. Idle tales suit idle readers; a history such as this may legitimately demand from those who study it some degree of mental application.

If, then, the traveler lands from the North Sea (which is the only sea he can land from) he will find himself on a sandy beach, dipping rapidly to deep water and well adapted for bathing. As he stands facing inland, the sands stretch in a long line southerly on his left; on his right rises the bold bluff of Sandy Nab with its swelling outline, its grass-covered dunes, and its sparse firs;

directly in front of him, abutting on the beach, is the high wall inclosing the Grange property; a gate in the middle gives access to the grounds. The Grange faces south, and lies in the shelter of Sandy Nab. In front of it are pleasure-grounds, then a sunk fence, then spacious meadow-lands. The property is about a mile and a half (rather more than less) in length, to half-a-mile in breadth. Besides the Grange there is a small farm-house, or bailiff's house, in the southwest corner of the estate. On the north the boundary consists of moorlands, to the east (as has been seen) of the beach, to the west and south of a public road. At the end of the Grange walls this road turns to the right, inland, and passes by Fillby village; it then develops into the highroad to Easthorpe with its market, shops, and station, ten miles away. Instead, however, of pursuing this

longer route, the traveler from the Grange grounds may reach Fillby and Easthorpe sooner by crossing the road on the west, and traversing the Scarsmoor Castle property, across which runs a broad carriage road, open to the public. He will first — after entering Lord Lynborough's gates — pass over a bridge which spans a little river, often nearly dry, but liable to be suddenly flooded by a rainfall in the hills. Thus he enters a beautiful demesne, rich in wood and undergrowth, in hill and valley, in pleasant rides and winding drives. The Castle itself — an ancient gray building, square and massive, stands on an eminence in the northwest extremity of the property; the ground drops rapidly in front of it, and it commands a view of Nab Grange and the sea beyond, being in its turn easily visible from either of these points. The road above mentioned, on

leaving Lynborough's park, runs across the moors in a southwesterly line to Fillby, a little village of some three hundred souls. All around and behind this, stretching to Easthorpe, are great rolling moors, rich in beauty as in opportunities for sport, yet cutting off the little settlement of village, Castle, and Grange from the outer world by an isolation more complete than the mere distance would in these days seem to entail. The church, two or three little shops, and one policeman, sum up Fillby's resources: anything more, for soul's comfort, for body's supply or protection, must come across the moors from Easthorpe.

One point remains — reserved to the end by reason of its importance. A gate has been mentioned as opening on to the beach from the grounds of Nab Grange. He who enters at that gate and makes for the Grange

follows the path for about two hundred yards in a straight line, and then takes a curving turn to the right, which in time brings him to the front door of the house. But the path goes on — growing indeed narrower, ultimately becoming a mere grass-grown track, yet persisting quite plain to see — straight across the meadows, about a hundred yards beyond the sunk fence which bounds the Grange gardens, and in full view from the Grange windows; and it desists not from its course till it reaches the rough stone wall which divides the Grange estate from the highroad on the west. This wall it reaches at a point directly opposite to the Scarsmoor lodge; in the wall there is a gate, through which the traveler must pass to gain the road.

There is a gate — and there had always been a gate; that much at least is undisputed.

It will, of course, be obvious that if the residents at the Castle desired to reach the beach for the purpose of bathing or other diversions, and proposed to go on their feet, incomparably their best, shortest, and most convenient access thereto lay through this gate and along the path which crossed the Grange property and issued through the Grange gate on to the seashore. To go round by the road would take at least three times as long. Now the season was the month of June; Lord Lynborough was a man tenacious of his rights — and uncommonly fond of bathing.

On the other hand, it might well be that the Marchesa di San Servolo — the present owner of Nab Grange — would prefer that strangers should not pass across her property, in full view and hail of her windows, without her permission and consent. That this,

indeed, was the lady's attitude might be gathered from the fact that, on this Sunday morning in June, Captain Irons and Mr. Stillford, walking back through the Scarsmoor grounds from Fillby church as they had proposed, found the gate leading from the road into the Grange meadows securely padlocked. Having ignored this possibility, they had to climb, incidentally displacing, but carefully replacing, a number of prickly furze branches which the zeal of the Marchesa's bailiff had arranged along the top rail of the gate.

"Boys been coming in?" asked Irons.

"It may be that," said Stillford, smiling as he arranged the prickly defenses to the best advantage.

The Grange expedition to church had to confess to having seen nothing of the Castle party — and in so far it was dubbed a failure.

There was indeed a decorous row of servants in the household seat, but the square oaken pew in the chancel, with its brass rods and red curtains in front, and its fireplace at the back, stood empty. The two men reported having met, as they walked home through Scarsmoor, a very large fat man with a face which they described variously, one likening it to the sinking sun on a misty day, the other to a copper saucepan.

"Not Lord Lynborough, I do trust!" shuddered little Violet Dufaure. She and Miss Gilletson had driven home by the road, regaining the Grange by the south gate and the main drive.

Stillford was by the Marchesa. He spoke to her softly, covered by the general conversation. "You might have told us to take a key!" he said reproachfully. "That gorse is very dangerous to a man's Sunday clothes."

"It looks — businesslike, doesn't it?" she smiled.

"Oh, uncommon! When did you have it done?"

"The day before yesterday. I wanted there to be no mistake from the very first. That's the best way to prevent any unpleasantness."

"Possibly." Stillford sounded doubtful. "Going to have a notice-board, Marchesa?"

"He will hardly make that necessary, will he?"

"Well, I told you that in my judgment your right to shut it against him is very doubtful."

"You told me a lot of things I didn't understand," she retorted rather pettishly.

He shrugged his shoulders with a laugh. No good lay in anticipating trouble. Lord Lynborough might take no notice.

In the afternoon the Marchesa's guests played golf on a rather makeshift nine-hole course laid out in the meadows. Miss Gilletson slept. The Marchesa herself mounted the top of Sandy Nab, and reviewed her situation. The Colonel would doubtless have liked to accompany her, but he was not thereto invited.

Helena Vittoria Maria Antonia, Marchesa di San Servolo, was now in her twenty-fourth year. Born of an Italian father and an English mother, she had bestowed her hand on her paternal country, but her heart remained in her mother's. The Marchese took her as his second wife and his last pecuniary resource; in both capacities she soothed his declining years. Happily for her — and not unhappily for the world at large — these were few. He had not time to absorb her youth or to spend more than a small

portion of her inheritance. She was left a widow — stepmother of adult Italian offspring — owner for life of an Apennine fortress. She liked the fortress much, but disliked the stepchildren (the youngest was of her own age) more. England — her mother's home — presented itself in the light of a refuge. In short, she had grave doubts about ever returning to Italy.

Nab Grange was in the market. Ancestrally a possession of the Caverlys (for centuries a noble but unennobled family in those parts), it had served for the family's dower-house, till a bad race-meeting had induced the squire of the day to sell it to a Mr. Cross of Leeds. The Crosses held it for seventy years. Then the executors of the last Cross sold it to the Marchesa. This final transaction happened a year before Lynborough came home. The "Beach Path"

had, as above recorded, been closed only for two days.

The path was not just now in the Marchesa's thoughts. Nothing very definite was. Rather, as her eyes ranged from moor to sea, from the splendid uniformity of the unclouded sky to the ravishing variety of many-tinted earth, from the green of the Grange meadows (the one spot of rich emerald on the near coast-line, owing its hues to Sandy Nab's kindly shelter) to the gray mass of Scarsmoor Castle — there was in her heart that great mixture of content and longing that youth and — (what put bluntly amounts to) — a fine day are apt to raise. And youth allied with beauty becomes self-assertive, a claimant against the world, a plaintiff against facts before High Heaven's tribunal. The Marchesa was infinitely delighted with Nab Grange — graciously content with Na-

ture — not ill-pleased with herself — but, in fine, somewhat discontented with her company. That was herself? Not precisely, though, at the moment, objectively. She was wondering whether her house-party was all that her youth and her beauty — to say nothing of her past endurance of the Marchese — entitled her to claim and to enjoy.

Then suddenly across her vision, cutting the sky-line, seeming to divide for a moment heaven above from earth beneath, passed a tall meager figure, and a head of lines clean as if etched by a master's needle. The profile stood as carved in fine ivory; glints of color flashed from hair and beard. The man softly sang a love song as he walked — but he never looked toward the Marchesa.

She sat up suddenly. "Could that be Lord Lynborough?" she thought — and smiled.

Chapter Three

OF LAW AND NATURAL RIGHTS

Lynborough sat on the terrace which ran along the front of the Castle and looked down, over Nab Grange, to the sea. With him were Leonard Stabb and Roger Wilbraham. The latter was a rather short, slight man of dark complexion; although a light-weight he was very wiry and a fine boxer. His intellectual gifts corresponded well with his physical equipment; an acute ready mind was apt to deal with every-day problems and pressing necessities; it had little turn either for speculation or for fancy. He had dreams neither about the past, like Stabb, nor about present things, like

Lynborough. His was, in a word, the practical spirit, and Lynborough could not have chosen a better right-hand man.

They were all smoking; a silence had rested long over the party. At last Lynborough spoke.

"There's always," he said, "something seductive in looking at a house when you know nothing about the people who live in it."

"But I know a good deal about them," Wilbraham interposed with a laugh. "Coltson's been pumping all the village, and I've had the benefit of it." Coltson was Lynborough's own man, an old soldier who had been with him nearly fifteen years and had accompanied him on all his travels and excursions.

Lynborough paid no heed; he was not the man to be put off his reflections by intrusive facts.

"The blank wall of a strange house is like the old green curtain at the theater. It may rise for you any moment and show you — what? Now what is there at Nab Grange?"

"A lot of country bumpkins, I expect," growled Stabb.

"No, no," Wilbraham protested. "I'll tell you, if you like ——"

"What's there?" Lynborough pursued. "I don't know. You don't know — no, you don't, Roger, and you probably wouldn't even if you were inside. But I like not knowing — I don't want to know. We won't visit at the Grange, I think. We will just idealize it, Cromlech." He cast his queer elusive smile at his friend.

"Bosh!" said Stabb. "There's sure to be a woman there — and I'll be bound she'll call on you!"

"She'll call on me? Why?"

"Because you're a lord," said Stabb, scorning any more personal form of flattery.

"That fortuitous circumstance should, in my judgment, rather afford me protection."

"If you come to that, she's somebody herself." Wilbraham's knowledge would bubble out, for all the want of encouragement.

"Everybody's somebody," murmured Lynborough — "and it is a very odd arrangement. Can't be regarded as permanent, eh, Cromlech? Immortality by merit seems a better idea. And by merit I mean originality. Well — I sha'n't know the Grange, but I like to look at it. The way I picture her ——"

"Picture whom?" asked Stabb.

"Why, the Lady of the Grange, to be sure ——"

"Tut, tut, who's thinking of the woman? — if there is a woman at all."

"I am thinking of the woman, Cromlech, and I've a perfect right to think of her. At least, if not of that woman, of a woman — whose like I've never met."

"She must be of an unusual type," opined Stabb with a reflective smile.

"She is, Cromlech. Shall I describe her?"

"I expect you must."

"Yes, at this moment — with the evening just this color — and the Grange down there — and the sea, Cromlech, so remarkably large, I'm afraid I must. She is, of course, tall and slender; she has, of course, a rippling laugh; her eyes are, of course, deep and dreamy, yet lighting to a sparkle when one challenges. All this may be presupposed. It's her tint, Cromlech, her color — that's what's in my mind to-night; that, you will find, is her most distinguishing, her most wonderful characteristic."

"That's just what the Vicar told Coltson! At least he said that the Marchesa had a most extraordinary complexion." Wilbraham had got something out at last.

"Roger, you bring me back to earth. You substitute the Vicar's impression for my imagination. Is that kind?"

"It seems such a funny coincidence."

"Supposing it to be a mere coincidence — no doubt! But I've always known that I had to meet that complexion somewhere. If here — so much the better!"

"I have a great doubt about that," said Leonard Stabb.

"I can get over, it Cromlech! At least consider that."

"But you're not going to know her!" laughed Wilbraham.

"I shall probably see her as we walk down to bathe by Beach Path."

A deferential voice spoke from behind his chair. "I beg your pardon, my lord, but Beach Path is closed." Coltson had brought Lynborough his cigar-case and laid it down on a table by him as he communicated this intelligence.

"Closed, Coltson?"

"Yes, my lord. There's a padlock on the gate, and a — er — barricade of furze. And the gardeners tell me they were warned off yesterday."

"My gardeners warned off Beach Path?"

"Yes, my lord."

"By whose orders?"

"Her Excellency's, my lord."

"That's the Marchesa — Marchesa di San Servolo," Wilbraham supplied.

"Yes, that's the name, sir," said Coltson respectfully.

"What about her complexion now, Ambrose?" chuckled Stabb.

"The Marchesa di San Servolo? Is that right, Coltson?"

"Perfectly correct, my lord. Italian, I understand, my lord."

"Excellent, excellent! She has closed my Beach Path? I think I have reflected enough for to-night. I'll go in and write a letter." He rose, smiled upon Stabb, who himself was grinning broadly, and walked through an open window into the house.

"Now you may see something happen," said Leonard Stabb.

"What's the matter? Is it a public path?" asked Wilbraham.

With a shrug Stabb denied all knowledge — and, probably, all interest. Coltson, who had lingered behind his master, undertook to reply.

"Not exactly public, as I understand, sir. But the Castle has always used it. Green — that's the head-gardener — tells me so, at least."

"By legal right, do you mean?" Wilbraham had been called to the Bar, although he had never practised. No situation gives rise to greater confidence on legal problems.

"I don't think you'll find that his lordship will trouble much about that, sir," was Coltson's answer, as he picked up the cigar-case again and hurried into the library with it.

"What does the man mean by that?" asked Wilbraham scornfully. "It's a purely legal question — Lynborough must trouble about it." He rose and addressed Stabb somewhat as though that gentleman were the Court. "Not a public right of way? We don't argue that? Then it's a case of

dominant and servient tenement — a right of way by user as of right, or by a lost grant. That — or nothing!"

"I daresay," muttered Stabb very absently.

"Then what does Coltson mean —— ?"

"Coltson knows Ambrose — you don't. Ambrose will never go to law — but he'll go to bathe."

"But she'll go to law if he goes to bathe!" cried the lawyer.

Stabb blinked lazily, and seemed to loom enormous over his cigar. "I daresay — if she's got a good case," said he. "Do you know, Wilbraham, I don't much care whether she does or not? But in regard to her complexion —— "

"What the devil does her complexion matter?" shouted Wilbraham.

"The human side of a thing always

matters," observed Leonard Stabb. "For instance — pray sit down, Wilbraham — standing up and talking loud prove nothing, if people would only believe it — the permanence of hierarchical systems may be historically observed to bear a direct relation to the emoluments."

"Would you mind telling me your opinion on two points, Stabb? We can go on with that argument of yours afterward."

"Say on, Wilbraham."

"Is Lynborough in his right senses?"

"The point is doubtful."

"Are you in yours?"

Stabb reflected. "I am sane — but very highly specialized," was his conclusion.

Wilbraham wrinkled his brow. "All the same, right of way or no right of way is purely a legal question," he persisted.

"I think you're highly specialized too,"

said Stabb. "But you'd better keep quiet and see it through, you know. There may be some fun — it will serve to amuse the Archdeacon when you write." Wilbraham's father was a highly esteemed dignitary of the order mentioned.

Lynborough came out again, smoking a cigar. His manner was noticeably more alert: his brow was unclouded, his whole mien tranquil and placid.

"I've put it all right," he observed. "I've written her a civil letter. Will you men bathe to-morrow?"

They both assented to the proposition.

"Very well. We'll start at eight. We may as well walk. By Beach Path it's only about half-a-mile."

"But the path's stopped, Ambrose," Stabb objected.

"I've asked her to have the obstruction

removed before eight o'clock," Lynborough explained.

"If it isn't?" asked Roger Wilbraham.

"We have hands," answered Lynborough, looking at his own very small ones.

"Wilbraham wants to know why you don't go to law, Ambrose."

Lord Lynborough never shrank from explaining his views and convictions.

"The law disgusts me. So does my experience of it. You remember the beer, Cromlech? Nobody ever acted more wisely or from better motives. And if I made money — as I did, till the customers left off coming — why not? I was unobtrusively doing good. Then Juanita's affair! I acted as a gentleman is bound to act. Result — a year's imprisonment! I lay stress on these personal experiences, but not too great stress. The law, Roger, always considers what you have

had and what you now have — never what you ought to have. Take that path! It happens to be a fact that my grandfather, and my father, and I have always used that path. That's important by law, I daresay —— "

"Certainly, Lord Lynborough."

"Just what would be important by law!" commented Lynborough. "And I have made use of the fact in my letter to the Marchesa. But in my own mind I stand on reason and natural right. Is it reasonable that I, living half-a-mile from my bathing, should have to walk two miles to get to it? Plainly not. Isn't it the natural right of the owner of Scarsmoor to have that path open through Nab Grange? Plainly yes. That, Roger, although, as I say, not the shape in which I have put the matter before the Marchesa — because she, being a woman, would

be unappreciative of pure reason — is really the way in which the question presents itself to my mind — and, I'm sure, to Cromlech's ?"

"Not the least in the world to mine," said Stabb. "However, Ambrose, the young man thinks us both mad."

"You do, Roger ?" His smile persuaded to an affirmative reply.

"I'm afraid so, Lord Lynborough."

"No 'Lord,' if you love me! Why do you think me mad ? Cromlech, of course, is mad, so we needn't bother about him."

"You're not — not practical," stammered Roger.

"Oh, I don't know, really I don't know. You'll see that I shall get that path open. And in the end I did get that public-house closed. And Juanita's husband had to leave the country, owing to the heat of local feeling

— aroused entirely by me. Juanita stayed behind and, after due formalities, married again most happily. I'm not altogether inclined to call myself unpractical. Roger!" He turned quickly to his secretary. "Your father's what they call a High Churchman, isn't he?"

"Yes — and so am I," said Roger.

"He has his Church. He puts that above the State, doesn't he? He wouldn't obey the State against the Church? He wouldn't do what the Church said was wrong because the State said it was right?"

"How could he? Of course he wouldn't," answered Roger.

"Well, I have my Church — inside here." He touched his breast. "I stand where your father does. Why am I more mad than the Archdeacon, Roger?"

"But there's all the difference!"

"Of course there is," said Stabb. "All the difference that there is between being able to do it and not being able to do it — and I know of none so profound."

"There's no difference at all," declared Lynborough. "Therefore — as a good son, no less than as a good friend — you will come and bathe with me to-morrow?"

"Oh, I'll come and bathe, by all means, Lynborough."

"By all means! Well said, young man. By all means, that is, which are becoming in opposing a lady. What precisely those may be we well consider when we see the strength of her opposition."

"That doesn't sound so very unpractical, after all," Stabb suggested to Roger.

Lynborough took his stand before Stabb, hands in pockets, smiling down at the bulk of his friend.

"O Cromlech, Haunter of Tombs," he said, "Cromlech, Lover of Men long Dead, there is a possible — indeed a probable — chance — there is a divine hope — that Life may breathe here on this coast, that the blood may run quick, that the world may move, that our old friend Fortune may smile, and trick, and juggle, and favor us once more. This, Cromlech, to a man who had determined to reform, who came home to assume — what was it? Oh yes — responsibilities! — this is most extraordinary luck. Never shall it be said that Ambrose Caverly, being harnessed and carrying a bow, turned himself back in the day of battle!"

He swayed himself to and fro on his heels, and broke into merry laughter.

"She'll get the letter to-night, Cromlech. I've sent Coltson down with it — he pro-

ceeds decorously by the highroad and the main approach. But she'll get it. Cromlech, will she read it with a beating heart? Will she read it with a flushing cheek? And if so, Cromlech, what, I ask you, will be the particular shade of that particular flush?"

"Oh, the sweetness of the game!" said he.

Over Nab Grange the stars seemed to twinkle roguishly.

Chapter Four

THE MESSAGE OF A PADLOCK

Lord Lynborough presents his compliments to her Excellency the Marchesa di San Servolo. Lord Lynborough has learnt, with surprise and regret, that his servants have within the last two days been warned off Beach Path, and that a padlock and other obstacles have been placed on the gate leading to the path, by her Excellency's orders. Lord Lynborough and his predecessors have enjoyed the use of this path by themselves, their agents and servants, for many years back—certainly for fifty, as Lord Lynborough knows from his father and from old servants, and Lord Lynborough is not disposed to acquiesce in any obstruction being raised to his continued use of it. He must therefore request her Excellency to have the kindness to order that the padlock and other obstacles shall be removed, and he will be obliged by this being done before eight o'clock to-morrow morning—at which time Lord Lynborough intends to proceed by Beach Path to the sea in order to bathe. Scarsmoor Castle; 13th June.

The reception of this letter proved an agree-

able incident of an otherwise rather dull Sunday evening at Nab Grange. The Marchesa had been bored; the Colonel was sulky. Miss Gilletson had forbidden cards; her conscience would not allow herself, nor her feelings of envy permit other people, to play on the Sabbath. Lady Norah and Violet Dufaure were somewhat at cross-purposes, each preferring to talk to Stillford and endeavoring, under a false show of amity, to foist Captain Irons on to the other.

"Listen to this!" cried the Marchesa vivaciously. She read it out. "He doesn't beat about the bush, does he? I'm to surrender before eight o'clock to-morrow morning!"

"Sounds rather a peremptory sort of a chap!" observed Colonel Wenman.

"I," remarked Lady Norah, "shouldn't so much as answer him, Helena."

"I shall certainly answer him and tell him that he'll trespass on my property at his peril," said the Marchesa haughtily. "Isn't that the right way to put it, Mr. Stillford?"

"If it would be a trespass, that might be one way to put it," was Stillford's professionally cautious advice. "But as I ventured to tell you when you determined to put on the padlock, the rights in the matter are not quite as clear as we could wish."

"When I bought this place, I bought a private estate — a private estate, Mr. Stillford — for myself — not a short cut for Lord Lynborough! Am I to put up a notice for him, 'This Way to the Bathing-Machines'?"

"I wouldn't stand it for a moment." Captain Irons sounded bellicose.

Violet Dufaure was amicably inclined.

"You might give him leave to walk through. It would be a bore for him to go round by the road every time."

"Certainly I might give him leave if he asked for it," retorted the Marchesa rather sharply. "But he doesn't. He orders me to open my gate — and tells me he means to bathe! As if I cared whether he bathed or not! What is it to me, I ask you, Violet, whether the man bathes or not?"

"I beg your pardon, Marchesa, but aren't you getting a little off the point?" Stillford intervened deferentially.

"No, I'm not. I never get off the point, Mr. Stillford. Do I, Colonel Wenman?"

"I've never known you to do it in my life, Marchesa." There was, in fact, as Lynborough had ventured to anticipate, a flush on the Marchesa's cheek, and the Colonel knew his place.

"There, Mr. Stillford!" she cried triumphantly. Then she swept — the expression is really applicable — across the room to her writing-table. "I shall be courteous, but quite decisive," she announced over her shoulder as she sat down.

Stillford stood by the fire, smiling doubtfully. Evidently it was no use trying to stop the Marchesa; she had insisted on locking the gate, and she would persist in keeping it locked till she was forced, by process of law or otherwise, to open it again. But if the Lords of Scarsmoor Castle really had used it without interruption for fifty years (as Lord Lynborough asserted) — well, the Marchesa's rights were at least in a precarious position.

The Marchesa came back with her letter in her hand.

"'The Marchesa di San Servolo,'" she read

out to an admiring audience, " 'presents her compliments to Lord Lynborough. The Marchesa has no intention of removing the padlock and other obstacles which have been placed on the gate to prevent trespassing — either by Lord Lynborough or by anybody else. The Marchesa is not concerned to know Lord Lynborough's plans in regard to bathing or otherwise. Nab Grange; 13th June.' "

The Marchesa looked round on her friends with a satisfied air.

"I call that good," she remarked. "Don't you, Norah?"

"I don't like the last sentence."

"Oh yes! Why, that'll make him angrier than anything else! Please ring the bell for me, Mr. Stillford; it's just behind you."

The butler came back.

"Who brought Lord Lynborough's letter?" asked the Marchesa.

"I don't know who it is, your Excellency — one of the upper servants at the Castle, I think.'

"How did he come to the house?"

"By the drive — from the south gate — I believe, your Excellency."

"I'm glad of that," she declared, looking positively dangerous. "Tell him to go back the same way, and not by the — by what Lord Lynborough chooses to call 'Beach Path.' Here's a letter for him to take."

"Very good, your Excellency." The butler received the letter and withdrew.

"Yes," said Lady Norah, "rather funny he should call it Beach Path, isn't it?"

"I don't know whether it's funny or not, Norah, but I do know that I don't care what he calls it. He may call it Piccadilly if he

likes, but it's my path all the same." As she spoke she looked, somewhat defiantly, at Mr. Stillford.

Violet Dufaure, whose delicate frame held an indomitable and indeed pugnacious spirit, appealed to Stillford; "Can't Helena have him taken up if he trespasses?"

"Well, hardly, Miss Dufaure. The remedy would lie in the civil courts."

"Shall I bring an action against him? Is that it? Is that right?" cried the Marchesa.

"That's the ticket, eh, Stillford?" asked the Colonel.

Stillford's position was difficult; he had the greatest doubt about his client's case.

"Suppose you leave him to bring the action?" he suggested. "When he does, we can fully consider our position."

"But if he insists on using the path to-morrow?"

"He'll hardly do that," Stillford persuaded her. "You'll probably get a letter from him, asking for the name of your solicitor. You will give him my name; I shall obtain the name of his solicitor, and we shall settle it between us — amicably, I hope, but in any case without further personal trouble to you, Marchesa."

"Oh!" said the Marchesa blankly. "That's how it will be, will it?"

"That's the usual course — the proper way of doing the thing."

"It may be proper; it sounds very dull, Mr. Stillford. What if he does try to use the path to-morrow — 'in order to bathe' as he's good enough to tell me?"

"If you're right about the path, then you've the right to stop him," Stillford answered rather reluctantly. "If you do stop him, that, of course, raises the question in a

concrete form. You will offer a formal resistance. He will make a formal protest. Then the lawyers step in."

"We always end with the lawyers — and my lawyer doesn't seem sure I'm right!"

"Well, I'm not sure," said Stillford bluntly. "It's impossible to be sure at this stage of the case."

"For all I see, he may use my path to-morrow!" The Marchesa was justifying her boast that she could stick to a point.

"Now that you've lodged your objection, that won't matter much legally."

"It will annoy me intensely," the Marchesa complained.

"Then we'll stop him," declared Colonel Wenman valorously.

"Politely — but firmly," added Captain Irons.

"And what do you say, Mr. Stillford?"

"I'll go with these fellows anyhow — and see that they don't overstep the law. No more than the strictly necessary force, Colonel!"

"I begin to think that the law is rather stupid," said the Marchesa. She thought it stupid; Lynborough held it iniquitous; the law was at a discount, and its majesty little reverenced, that night.

Ultimately, however, Stillford persuaded the angry lady to — as he tactfully put it — give Lynborough a chance. "See what he does first. If he crosses the path now, after warning, your case is clear. Write to him again then, and tell him that, if he persists in trespassing, your servants have orders to interfere."

"That lets him bathe to-morrow!" Once more the Marchesa returned to her point — a very sore one.

"Just for once, it really doesn't matter!" Stillford urged.

Reluctantly she acquiesced; the others were rather relieved — not because they objected to a fight, but because eight in the morning was rather early to start one. Breakfast at the Grange was at nine-thirty, and, though the men generally went down for a dip, they went much later than Lord Lynborough proposed to go.

"He shall have one chance of withdrawing gracefully," the Marchesa finally decided.

Stillford was unfeignedly glad to hear her say so; he had, from a professional point of view, no desire for a conflict. Inquiries which he had made in Fillby — both from men in Scarsmoor Castle employ and from independent persons — had convinced him that Lynborough's case was strong. For many

years — through the time of two Lynboroughs before the present at Scarsmoor, and through the time of three Crosses (the predecessors of the Marchesa) at Nab Grange, Scarsmoor Castle had without doubt asserted this dominant right over Nab Grange. It had been claimed and exercised openly — and, so far as he could discover, without protest or opposition. The period, as he reckoned it, would prove to be long enough to satisfy the law as to prescription; it was very unlikely that any document existed — or anyhow could be found — which would serve to explain away the presumption which uses such as this gave. In fine, the Marchesa's legal adviser was of opinion that in a legal fight the Marchesa would be beaten. His own hope lay in compromise; if friendly relations could be established, there would be a chance of a compro-

mise. He was sure that the Marchesa would readily grant as a favor — and would possibly give in return for a nominal payment — all that Lynborough asked. That would be the best way out of the difficulty. "Let us temporize, and be conciliatory," thought the man of law.

Alas, neither conciliation nor dilatoriness was in Lord Lynborough's line! He read the Marchesa's letter with appreciation and pleasure. He admired the curtness of its intimation, and the lofty haughtiness with which the writer dismissed the subject of his bathing. But he treated the document — it cannot be said that he did wrong — as a plain defiance. It appeared to him that no further declaration of war was necessary; he was not concerned to consider evidence nor to weigh his case, as Stillford wanted to consider the Marchesa's evidence and to

weigh her case. This for two reasons: first, because he was entirely sure that he was right; secondly because he had no intention of bringing the question to trial. Lynborough knew but one tribunal; he had pointed out its local habitation to Roger Wilbraham.

Accordingly it fell out that conciliatory counsels and Fabian tactics at Nab Grange received a very severe — perhaps indeed a fatal — shock the next morning.

At about nine o'clock the Marchesa was sitting in her dressing-gown by the open window, reading her correspondence and sipping an early cup of tea — she had become quite English in her habits. Her maid reëntered the room, carrying in her hand a small parcel. "For your Excellency," she said. "A man has just left it at the door." She put the parcel down on the marble top of the dressing-table.

"What is it?" asked the Marchesa indolently.

"I don't know, your Excellency. It's hard, and very heavy for its size."

Laying down the letter which she had been perusing, the Marchesa took up the parcel and cut the string which bound it. With a metallic clink there fell on her dressing-table — a padlock! To it was fastened a piece of paper, bearing these words: "Padlock found attached to gate leading to Beach Path. Detached by order of Lord Lynborough. With Lord Lynborough's compliments."

Now, too, Lynborough might have got his flush — if he could have been there to see it!'

"Bring me my field-glasses!" she cried.

The window commanded a view of the gardens, of the meadows beyond the sunk fence, of the path — Beach Path as that man

was pleased to call it! — and of the gate. At the last-named object the enraged Marchesa directed her gaze. The barricade of furze branches was gone! The gate hung open upon its hinges!

While she still looked, three figures came across the lens. A very large stout shape — a short spare form — a tall, lithe, very lean figure. They were just reaching the gate, coming from the direction of the sea. The two first were strangers to her; the third she had seen for a moment the afternoon before on Sandy Nab. It was Lynborough himself, beyond a doubt. The others must be friends — she cared not about them. But to sit here with the padlock before her, and see Lynborough pass through the gate — a meeker woman than she had surely been moved to wrath! He had bathed — as he had said he would. And he had sent her the padlock.

That was what came of listening to conciliatory counsels, of letting herself give ear to dilatory persuasions!

"War!" declared the Marchesa. "War — war — war! And if he's not careful, I won't confine it to the path either!" She seemed to dream of conquests, perhaps to reckon resources, whereof Mr. Stillford, her legal adviser, had taken no account.

She carried the padlock down to breakfast with her; it was to her as a Fiery Cross; it summoned her and her array to battle. She exhibited it to her guests.

"Now, gentlemen, I'm in your hands!" said she. "Is that man to walk over my property for his miserable bathing to-morrow?"

He would have been a bold man who, at that moment, would have answered her with a "Yes."

Chapter Five

THE BEGINNING OF WAR

An enviable characteristic of Lord Lynborough's was that, when he had laid the fuse, he could wait patiently for the explosion. (That last word tends to recur in connection with him.) Provided he knew that his adventure and his joke were coming, he occupied the interval profitably — which is to say, as agreeably as he could. Having launched the padlock — his symbolical ultimatum — and asserted his right, he spent the morning in dictating to Roger Wilbraham a full, particular, and veracious account of his early differences with the Dean of Christ Church. Roger found his task entertaining,

for Lynborough's mimicry of his distinguished opponent was excellent. Stabb meanwhile was among the tombs in an adjacent apartment.

This studious tranquillity was disturbed by the announcement of a call from Mr. Stillford. Not without difficulty he had persuaded the Marchesa to let him reconnoiter the ground — to try, if it seemed desirable, the effect of a bit of "bluff" — at any rate to discover, if he could, something of the enemy's plan of campaign. Stillford was, in truth, not a little afraid of a lawsuit!

Lynborough denied himself to no man, and received with courtesy every man who came. But his face grew grim and his manner distant when Stillford discounted the favorable effect produced by his appearance and manner — also by his name, well known in the county — by confessing that

he called in the capacity of the Marchesa's solicitor.

"A solicitor?" said Lynborough, slightly raising his brows.

"Yes. The Marchesa does me the honor to place her confidence in me; and it occurs to me that, before this unfortunate dispute ——"

"Why unfortunate?" interrupted Lynborough with an air of some surprise.

"Surely it is — between neighbors? The Castle and the Grange should be friends." His cunning suggestion elicited no response. "It occurred to me," he continued, somewhat less glibly, "that, before further annoyance or expense was caused, it might be well if I talked matters over with your lordship's solicitor."

"Sir," said Lynborough, "saving your presence — which, I must beg you to re-

member, was not invited by me — I don't like solicitors. I have no solicitor. I shall never have a solicitor. You can't talk with a non-existent person."

"But proceedings are the natural — the almost inevitable — result of such a situation as your action has created, Lord Lynborough. My client can't be flouted, she can't have her indubitable rights outraged ——"

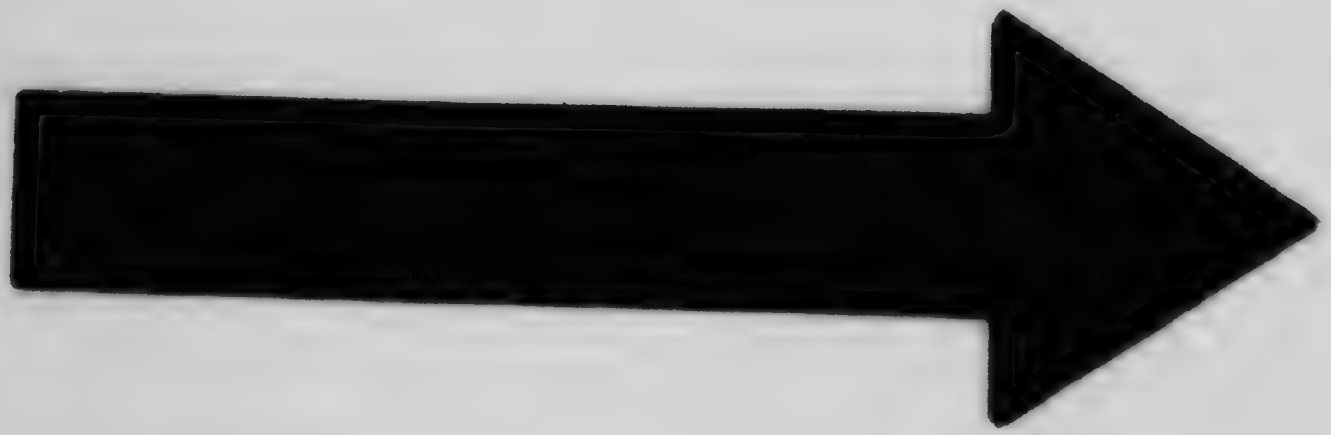
"Do you think they're indubitable?" Lynborough put in, with a sudden quick flash of his eyes.

For an instant Stillford hesitated. Then he made his orthodox reply. "As I am instructed, they certainly are."

"Ah!" said Lynborough dryly.

"No professional man could say more than that, Lord Lynborough."

"And they all say just as much! If I say



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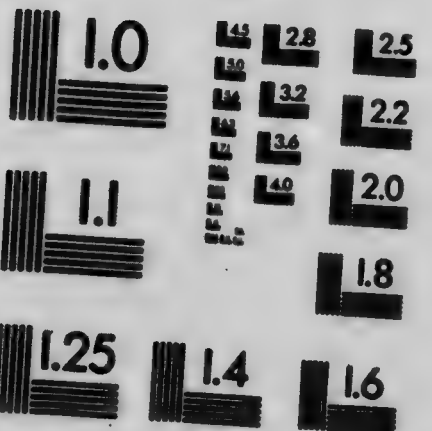

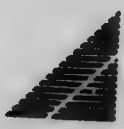

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anything you don't like, again remember that this interview is not of my seeking, Mr. Stillford."

Stillford waxed a trifle sarcastic. "You'll conduct your case in person?" he asked.

"If you hale me to court, I shall. Otherwise there's no question of a case."

This time Stillford's eyes brightened; yet still he doubted Lynborough's meaning.

"We shouldn't hesitate to take our case into court."

"Since you're wrong, you'd probably win," said Lynborough, with a smile. "But I'd make it cost you the devil of a lot of money. That, at least, the law can do — I'm not aware that it can do much else. But as far as I'm concerned, I should as soon appeal to the Pope of Rome in this matter as to a law-court — sooner in fact."

Stillford grew more confidently happy — and more amazed at Lynborough.

"But you've no right to — er — assert rights if you don't intend to support them."

"I do intend to support them, Mr. Stillford. That you'll very soon find out."

"By force?" Stillford himself was gratified by the shocked solemnity which he achieved in this question.

"If so, your side has no prejudice against legal proceedings. Prisons are not strange to me ——"

"What?" Stillford was a little startled. He had not heard all the stories about Lord Lynborough.

"I say, prisons are not strange to me. If necessary, I can do a month. I am, however, not altogether a novice in the somewhat degrading art of getting the other man to hit first. Then he goes to prison, doesn't he?

Just like the law! As if that had anything to do with the merits!"

Stillford kept his eye on the point valuable to him. "By supporting your claim I intended to convey supporting it by legal action."

"Oh, the cunning of this world, the cunning of this world, Roger!" He flung himself into an arm-chair, laughing. Stillford was already seated. "Take a cigarette, Mr. Stillford. You want to know whether I'm going to law or not, don't you? Well, I'm not. Is there anything else you want to know? Oh, by the way, we don't abstain from the law because we don't know the law. Permit me — Mr. Stillford, solicitor — Mr. Roger Wilbraham, of the Middle Temple, Esquire, barrister-at-law. Had I known you were coming, Roger should have worn his wig. No, no, we know the law — but we hate it."

Stillford was jubilant at a substantial gain — the appeal to law lay within the Marchesa's choice now; and that was in his view a great advantage. But he was legitimately irritated by Lynborough's sneers at hi profession.

"So do most of the people who belong to — the people to whom prisons are not strange, Lord Lynborough."

"Apostles — and so on?" asked Lynborough airily.

"I hardly recognize your lordship as belonging to that — er — er — category."

"That's the worst of it — nobody will," Lynborough admitted candidly. A note of sincere, if whimsical, regret sounded in his voice. "I've been trying for fifteen years. Yet some day I may be known as St. Ambrose!" His tones fell to despondency again. "St. Ambrose the Less, though — yes, I'm

afraid the Less. Apostles — even Saints — are much handicapped in these days, Mr. Stillford."

Stillford rose to his feet. "You've no more to say to me, Lord Lynborough?"

"I don't know that I ever had anything to say to you, Mr. Stillford. You must have gathered before now that I intend to use Beach Path."

"My client intends to prevent you."

"Yes? — Well, you're three able-bodied men down there — so my man tells me — you, and the Colonel, and the Captain. And we're three up here. It seems to me fair enough."

"You don't really contemplate settling the matter by personal conflict?" He was half amused, yet genuinely stricken in his habits of thought.

"Entirely a question for your side. We

shall use the path." Lynborough cocked his head on one side, looking up at the sturdy lawyer with a mischievous amusement. "I shall harry you, Mr. Stillford — day and night I shall harry you. If you mean to keep me off that path, vigils will be your portion. And you won't succeed."

"I make a last appeal to your lordship. The matter could, I believe, be adjusted on an amicable basis. The Marchesa could be prevailed upon to grant permission ——"

"I'd just as soon ask her permission to breathe," interrupted Lynborough.

"Then my mission is at an end."

"I congratulate you."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Well, you've found out the chief thing you wanted to know, haven't you? If you'd asked it point-blank, we should have saved

a lot of time. Good-by, Mr. Stillford. Roger, the bell's in reach of your hand."

"You're pleased to be amused at my expense?" Stillford had grown huffy.

"No — only don't think you've been clever at mine," Lynborough retorted placidly.

So they parted. Lynborough went back to his Dean, Stillford to the Marchesa. Still ruffled in his plumes, feeling that he had been chaffed and had made no adequate reply, yet still happy in the solid, the important fact which he had ascertained, he made his report to his client. He refrained from openly congratulating her on not being challenged to a legal fight; he contented himself with observing that it was convenient to be able to choose her own time to take proceedings.

Lady Norah was with the Marchesa. They

both listened attentively and questioned closely. Not the substantial points alone attracted their interest; Stillford was constantly asked — "How did he look when he said that?" He had no other answer than "Oh — well — er — rather queer." He left them, having received directions to rebarricade the gate as solidly and as offensively as possible; a board warning off trespassers was also to be erected.

Although not apt at a description of his interlocutor, yet Stillford seemed to have conveyed an impression.

"I think he must be delightful," said Norah thoughtfully, when the two ladies were left together. "I'm sure he's just the sort of a man I should fall in love with, Helena."

As a rule the Marchesa admired and applauded Norah's candor, praising it for a

certain patrician flavor — Norah spoke her mind, let the crowd think what it would! On this occasion she was somehow less pleased; she was even a little startled. She was conscious that any man with whom Norah was gracious enough to fall in love would be subjected to no ordinary assault; the Irish coloring is bad to beat, and Norah had it to perfection; moreover, the aforesaid candor makes matters move ahead.

"After all, it's my path he's trespassing on, Norah," the Marchesa remonstrated.

They both began to laugh. "The wretch is as handsome as — as a god," sighed Helena.

"You've seen him?" eagerly questioned Norah; and the glimpse — that tantalizing glimpse — on Sandy Nab was confessed to.

The Marchesa sprang up, clenching her fist. "Norah, I should like to have that man

at my feet, and then to trample on him! Oh, it's not only the path! I believe he's laughing at me all the time!"

"He's never seen you. Perhaps if he did he wouldn't laugh. And perhaps you wouldn't trample on him either."

"Ah, but I would!" She tossed her head impatiently. "Well, if you want to meet him. I expect you can do it — on my path to-morrow!"

This talk left the Marchesa vaguely vexed. Her feeling could not be called jealousy; nothing can hardly be jealous of nothing, and even as her acquaintance with Lynborough amounted to nothing, Lady Norah's also was represented by a cipher. But why should Norah want to know him? It was the Marchesa's path — by consequence it was the Marchesa's quarrel. Where did Norah stand in the matter? The

Marchesa had perhaps been constructing a little drama. Norah took leave to introduce a new character!

And not Norah alone, as it appeared at dinner. Little Violet Dufaure, whose appealing ways were notoriously successful with the emotionally weaker sex, took her seat at table with a demurely triumphant air. Captain Irons reproached her, with polite gallantry, for having deserted the croquet lawn after tea.

"Oh, I went for a walk to Fillby — through Scarsmoor, you know."

"Through Scarsmoor, Violet?" The Marchesa sounded rather startled again.

"It's a public road, you know, Helena. Isn't it, Mr. Stillford?"

Stillford admitted that it was. "All the same, perhaps the less we go there at the present moment ——"

"Oh, but Lord Lynborough asked me to come again and to go wherever I liked — not to keep to the stupid road."

Absolute silence reigned. Violet looked round with a smile which conveyed a general appeal for sympathy; there was, perhaps, special reference to Miss Gilletson as the guardian of propriety, and to the Marchesa as the owner of the disputed path.

"You see, I took Nellie, and the dear always does run away. She ran after a rabbit. I ran after her, of course. The rabbit ran into a hole, and I ran into Lord Lynborough. Helena, he's charming!"

"I'm thoroughly tired of Lord Lynborough," said the Marchesa icily.

"He must have known I was staying with you, I think; but he never so much as mentioned you. He just ignored you — the whole thing, I mean. Wasn't it tactful?"

Tactful it might have been; it did not appear to gratify the Marchesa.

"What a wonderful air there is about a — a *grand seigneio!*" pursued Violet reflectively. "Such a difference it makes!"

That remark did not gratify any of the gentlemen present; it implied a contrast, although it might not definitely assert one.

"It is such a pity that you've quarreled about that silly path!"

"Oh! oh! Miss Dufaure!" — "I say, come, Miss Dufaure!" — "Er — really, Miss Dufaure!" — these three remonstrances may be distributed indifferently among the three men. They felt that there was a risk of treason in the camp.

The Marchesa assumed her grandest manner; it was medieval — it was Titianesque.

"Fortunately, as it seems, Violet, I do not rely on your help to maintain my fights in

regard to the path. Pray meet Lord Lynborough as often as you please, but spare me any unnecessary mention of his name."

"I didn't mean any harm. It was all Nellie's fault."

The Marchesa's reply — if such it can be called — was delivered *sotto voce*, yet was distinctly audible. It was also brief. She said "*Nellie!*" Nellie was, of course, Miss Dufaure's dog.

Night fell upon an apparently peaceful land. Yet Violet was an absentee from the Marchesa's dressing-room that night, and even between Norah and her hostess the conversation showed a tendency to flag. Norah, for all her courage, dared not mention the name of Lynborough, and Helena most plainly would not. Yet what else was there to talk about? It had come to that point even so early in the war!

Meanwhile, up at Scarsmoor Castle, Lynborough, in exceedingly high spirits, talked to Leonard Stabb.

"Yes, Cromlech," he said, "a pretty girl, a very pretty girl if you like that *petite* insinuating style. For myself I prefer something a shade more — what shall we call it?"

"Don't care a hang," muttered Stabb.

"A trifle more in the grand manner, perhaps, Cromlech. And she hadn't anything like the complexion. I knew at once that it couldn't be the Marchesa. Do you bathe tomorrow morning?"

"And get my head broken?"

"Just stand still, and let them throw themselves against you, Cromlech. Roger! — Oh, he's gone to bed; stupid thing to do — that! Cromlech, old chap, I'm enjoying myself immensely."

He just touched his old friend's shoulder as he passed by: the caress was almost imperceptible. Stabb turned his broad red face round to him and laughed ponderously.

"Oh, and you understand!" cried Lynborough.

"I have never myself objected to a bit of fun with the girls," said Stabb.

Lynborough sank into a chair murmuring delightedly, "You're priceless, Cromlech!"

Chapter Six

EXERCISE BEFORE BREAKFAST

"Life — " (The extract is from Lynborough's diary, dated this same 14th of June) — "may be considered as a process (Cromlech's view, conducting to the tomb) — a program (as, I am persuaded, Roger conceives it, marking off each stage thereof with a duly guaranteed stamp of performance) — or as a progress — in which light I myself prefer to envisage it. Process — program — progress; the words, with my above-avowed preference, sound unimpeachably orthodox. Once I had a Bishop ancestor. He crops out.

"Yet I don't mean what he does. I don't

believe in growing better in the common sense — that is, in an increasing power to resist what tempts you, to refrain from doing what you want. That ideal seems to me, more and more, to start from the wrong end. No man refrains from doing what he wants to do. In the end the contradiction — the illogicality — is complete. You learn to want more wisely — that's all. Train desire, for you can never chain it.

"I'm engaged here and now on what is to all appearance the most trivial of businesses. I play the spiteful boy — she is an obstinate peevish girl. There are other girls too — one an insinuating tiny minx, who would wheedle a backward glance out of Simon Stylites as he remounted his pillar — and, by the sun in heaven, will get little more from this child of Mother Earth! There's another, I hear — Irish! — And

Irish is near my heart. But behind her — set in the uncertain radiance of my imagination — lies her Excellency. Heaven knows why! Save that it is gloriously paradoxical to meet a foreign Excellency in this spot, and to get to most justifiable, most delightful, loggerheads with her immediately. I have conceived Machiavellian devices. I will lure away her friends. I will isolate her, humiliate her, beat her in the fight. There may be some black eyes — some bruised hearts — but I shall do it. Why? I have always been gentle before. But so I feel toward her. And therefore I am afraid. This is the foeman for my steel, I think — I have my doubts but that she'll beat me in the end.

"When I talk like this, Cromlech chuckles, loves me as a show, despises me as a mind. Roger — young Roger Fitz-Archdeacon —

is all an incredulous amazement. I don't wonder. There is nothing so small and nothing so great — nothing so primitive and not a thing so complex — nothing so unimportant and so engrossing as this 'duel of the sexes.' A proves it a trifle, and is held great. B reckons it all-supreme, and becomes popular. C (a woman) describes the Hunter Man. D (a man) descants of the Pursuit by Woman. The oldest thing is the most canvassed and the least comprehended. But there's a reputation — and I suppose money — in it for anybody who can string phrases. There's blood-red excitement for everybody who can feel. Yet I've played my part in other affairs — not so much in dull old England, where you work five years to become a Member of Parliament, and five years more in order to get kicked out again — but in places where in a night you rise or

fall — in five minutes order the shooting-squad or face it — boil the cook or are stuffed into the pot yourself. (Cromlech, this is not exact scientific statement!) Yet always — everywhere — the woman! And why? On my honor, I don't know. What in the end is she?

"I adjourn the question — and put a broader one. What am I? The human being as such? If I'm a vegetable, am I not a mistake? If I'm an animal, am I not a cruelty? If I'm a soul, am I not misplaced? I'd say 'Yes' to all this, save that I enjoy myself so much. Because I have forty thousand a year? Hardly. I've had nothing, and been as completely out of reach of getting anything as the veriest pauper that ever existed — and yet I've had the deuce of a fine existence the while. I think there's only one solid blunder been made about man — he

oughtn't to have been able to think. It wastes time. It makes many people unhappy. That's not my case. I like it. It just wastes time.

"That insinuating minx, possessed of a convenient dog and an ingratiating manner, insinuated to-day that I was handsome. Well, she's pretty, and I suppose we're both better off for it. It is an introduction. But to myself I don't seem very handsome. I have my pride — I look a gentleman. But I look a queer foreign fish. I found myself envying the British robustness of that fine young chap who is so misguided as to be a lawyer.

"Ah, why do I object to lawyers? Tolstoi! — I used to say — or, at the risk of advanced intellects not recognizing one's allusions, one could go further back. But that is, in the end, all gammon. Every real conviction springs from personal experience.

I hate the law because it interfered with me. I'm not aware of any better reason. So I'm going on without it — unless somebody tries to steal my forty thousand, of course Ambrose, thou art a humbug — or, more precisely, thou canst not avoid being a human individual!"

Lord Lynborough completed the entry in his diary — he was tolerably well aware that he might just as well not have written it — and cast his eyes toward the window of the library. The stars were bright; a crescent moon decorated, without illuminating, the sky. The regular recurrent beat of the sea on the shore, traversing the interval in night's silence, struck on his ear. "If God knew Time, that might be His clock," said he. "Listen to its inexorable, peaceable, gentle, formidable stroke!"

His sleep that night was short and broken.

A fitful excitement was on his spirit: the glory of the summer morning wooed his restlessness. He would take his swim alone, and early. At six o'clock he slipped out of the house and made for Beach Path. The fortified gate was too strong for his unaided efforts. Roger Wilbraham had told him that, if the way were impeded, he had a right to "deviate." He deviated now, lightly vaulting over the four-foot-high stone wall. None was there to hinder him, and, with emotions appropriate to the occasion, he passed Nab Grange and gained the beach. When once he was in the water, the emotions went away.

They were to return — or, at any rate, to be succeeded by their brethren. After he had dressed, he sat down and smoked a cigarette as he regarded the smiling sea. This situation was so agreeable that he prolonged it for-

full half-an-hour; then a sudden longing for Coltson's coffee came over him. He jumped up briskly and made for the Grange gate.

He had left it open — it was shut now. None had been nigh when he passed through. Now a young woman in a white frock leant her elbows comfortably on its top rail and rested her pretty chin upon her hands. Lady Norah's blue eyes looked at him serenely from beneath black lashes of noticeable length — at any rate Lynborough noticed their length.

Lynborough walked up to the gate. With one hand he removed his hat, with the other he laid a tentative hand on the latch. Norah did not move or even smile.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Lynborough, "but if it does not incommode you, would you have the great kindness to permit me to open the gate?"

"Oh, I'm sorry; but this is a private path leading to Nab Grange. I suppose you're a stranger in these parts?"

"My name is Lynborough. I live at Scarsmoor there."

"Are you Lord Lynborough?" Norah sounded exceedingly interested. "*The* Lord Lynborough?"

"There's only one, so far as I'm aware," the owner of the title answered.

"I mean the one who has done all those — those — well, those funny things?"

"I rejoice if the recital of them has caused you any amusement. And now, if you will permit me ——"

"Oh, but I can't! Helena would never forgive me. I'm a friend of hers, you know — of the Marchesa di San Servolo. Really you can't come through here."

"Do you think you can stop me?"

"There isn't room for you to get over as long as I stand here — and the wall's too high to climb, isn't it?"

Lynborough studied the wall; it was twice the height of the wall on the other side; it might be possible to scale, but difficult and laborious; nor would he look imposing while struggling at the feat.

"You'll have to go round by the road," remarked Norah, breaking into a smile.

Lynborough was enjoying the conversation just as much as she was — but he wanted two things; one was victory, the other coffee.

"Can't I persuade you to move?" he said imploringly. "I really don't want to have to resort to more startling measures."

"You surely wouldn't use force against a girl, Lord Lynborough!"

"I said startling measures — not violent

ones," he reminded her. "Are your nerves good?"

"Excellent, thank you."

"You mean to stand where you are?"

"Yes — till you've gone away." Now she laughed openly at him. Lynborough delighted in the merry sound and the flash of her white teeth.

"It's a splendid morning, isn't it?" he asked. "I should think you stand about five feet five, don't you? By the way, whom have I the pleasure of conversing with?"

"My name is Norah Mountliffey."

"Ah, I knew your father very well." He drew back a few steps. "So you must excuse an old family friend for telling you that you make a charming picture at that gate. If I had a camera — Just as you are, please!" He held up his hand, as though to pose her.

"Am I quite right?" she asked, humoring

the joke, with her merry mischievous eyes set on Lynborough's face as she leaned over the top of the gate.

"Quite right. Now, please! Don't move!"

"Oh, I've no intention of moving," laughed Norah mockingly.

She kept her word; perhaps she was too surprised to do anything else. For Lynborough, clapping his hat on firmly, with a dart and a spring flew over her head.

Then she wheeled round — to see him standing two yards from her, his hat in his hand again, bowing apologetically.

"Forgive me for getting between you and the sunshine for a moment," he said. "But I thought I could still do five feet five; and you weren't standing upright either. I've done within an inch of six feet, you know. And now I'm afraid I must reluctantly ask you to excuse me. I thank you for the plea-

sure of this conversation." He bowed, put on his hat, turned, and began to walk away along Beach Path.

"You got the better of me that time, but you've not done with me yet," she cried, starting after him.

He turned and looked over his shoulder: save for his eyes his face was quite grave. He quickened his pace to a very rapid walk. Norah found that she must run, or fall behind. She began to run. Again that gravely derisory face turned upon her. She blushed, and fell suddenly to wondering whether in running she looked absurd. She fell to a walk. Lynborough seemed to know. Without looking round again, he abated his pace.

"Oh, I can't catch you if you won't stop!" she cried.

"My friend and secretary, Roger Wilbraham, tells me that I have no right to stop,"

Lynborough explained, looking round again, but not standing still. "I have only the right to pass and repass. I'm repassing now. He's a barrister, and he says that's the law. I daresay it is — but I regret that it prevents me from obliging you, Lady Norah."

"Well, I'm not going to make a fool of myself by running after you," said Norah crossly.

Lynborough walked slowly on; Norah followed; they reached the turn of the path towards the Grange hall door. They reached it — and passed it — both of them. Lynborough turned once more — with a surprised lift of his brows.

"At least I can see you safe off the premises!" laughed Norah, and with a quick dart forward she reduced the distance between them to half-a-yard. Lynborough seemed to have no objection; proximity

made conversation easier; he moved slowly on.

Norah seemed defeated — but suddenly she saw her chance, and hailed it with a cry. The Marchesa's bailiff — John Goodenough — was approaching the path from the house situated at the southwest corner of the meadow. Her cry of his name caught his attention — as well as Lynborough's. The latter walked a little quicker. John Goodenough hurried up. Lynborough walked steadily on.

"Stop him, John!" cried Norah, her eyes sparkling with new excitement. "You know her Excellency's orders? This is Lord Lynborough!"

"His lordship! Aye, it is. I beg your pardon, my lord, but — I'm very sorry to interfere with your lordship, but ——"

"You're in my way, Goodenough." For

John had got across his path, and barred progress. "Of course I must stand still if you impede my steps, but I do it under protest. I only want to repass."

"You can't come this way, my lord. I'm sorry, but it's her Excellency's strict orders. You must go back, my lord."

"I am going back — or I was till you stopped me."

"Back to where you came from, my lord."

"I came from Scarsmoor and I'm going back there, Goodenough."

"Where you came from last, my lord."

"No, no, Goodenough. At all events, her Excellency has no right to drive me into the sea." Lynborough's tone was plaintively expostulatory.

"Then if you won't go back, my lord, here we stay!" said John, bewildered but faithfully obstinate.

"Just your tactics!" Lynborough observed to Norah, a keen spectator of the scene. "But I'm not so patient of them from Goodenough."

"I don't know that you were very patient with me."

"Goodenough, if you use sufficient force I shall, of course, be prevented from continuing on my way. Nothing short of that, however, will stop me. And pray take care that the force is sufficient — neither more nor less than sufficient, Goodenough."

"I don't want to use no violence to your lordship. Well now, if I lay my hand on your lordship's shoulder, will that do to satisfy your lordship?"

"I don't know until you try it."

John's face brightened. "I reckon that's the way out. I reckon that's law, my lord. I puts my hand on your lordship's shoulder like that —— "

He suited the action to the word. In an instant Lynborough's long lithe arms were round him, Lynborough's supple lean leg twisted about his. Gently, as though he had been a little baby, Lynborough laid the sturdy fellow on the grass.

For all she could do, Norah Mountliffey cried "Bravo!" and clapped her hands. Goodenough sat up, scratched his head, and laughed feebly.

"Force not quite sufficient, Goodenough," cried Lynborough gaily. "Now I repass!"

He lifted his hat to Norah, then waved his hand. In her open impulsive way she kissed hers back to him as he turned away.

By one of those accidents peculiar to tragedy, the Marchesa's maid, performing her toilet at an upper window, saw this nefarious and traitorous deed!

"Swimming — jumping — wrestling! A

good morning's exercise! And all before those lazy chaps, Roger and Cromlech, are out of bed!"

So saying, Lord Lynborough vaulted the wall again in high good humor.

Chapter Seven

ANOTHER WEDGE!

Deprived of their leader's inspiration, the other two representatives of Scarsmoor did not brave the Passage Perilous to the sea that morning. Lynborough was well content to forego further aggression for the moment. His words declared his satisfaction ——

"I have driven a wedge — another wedge — into the Marchesa's phalanx. Yes, I think I may say a second wedge. Disaffection has made its entry into Nab Grange, Cromlech. The process of isolation has begun. Perhaps after lunch we will resume operations."

But fortune was to give him an opportun-

ity even before lunch. It appeared that Stabb had sniffed out the existence of two old brasses in Fillby Church; he was determined to inspect them at the earliest possible moment. Lynborough courteously offered to accompany him, and they set out together about eleven o'clock.

No incident marked their way. Lynborough rang up the parish clerk at his house, presented Stabb to that important functionary, and bespoke for him every consideration. Then he leaned against the outside of the churchyard wall, peacefully smoking a cigarette.

On the opposite side of the village street stood the Lynborough Arms. The inn was kept by a very superior man, who had retired to this comparative leisure after some years of service as butler with Lynborough's father. This excellent person, perceiving

Lynborough, crossed the road and invited him to partake of a glass of ale in memory of old days. Readily acquiescing, Lynborough crossed the road, sat down with the landlord on a bench by the porch, and began to discuss local affairs over the beer.

"I suppose you haven't kept up your cricket since you've been in foreign parts, my lord?" asked Dawson, the landlord, after some conversation which need not occupy this narrative. "We're playing a team from Easthorpe to-morrow, and we're very short."

"Haven't played for nearly fifteen years, Dawson. But I tell you what — I daresay my friend Mr. Wilbraham will play. Mr. Stabb's no use."

"Every one helps," said Dawson. "We've got two of the gentlemen from the Grange — Mr. Stillford, a good bat, and Captain

Irons, who can bowl a bit — or so John Goodenough tells me."

Lynborough's eyes had grown alert. "Well, I used to bowl a bit, too. If you're really hard up for a man, Dawson — really at a loss, you know — I'll play. It'll be better than going into the field short, won't it?"

Dawson was profuse in his thanks. Lynborough listened patiently.

"I tell you what I should like to do, Dawson," he said. "I should like to stand the lunch."

It was the turn of Dawson's eyes to grow alert. They did. Dawson supplied the lunch. The club's finances were slender, and its ideas correspondingly modest. But if Lord Lynborough "stood" the lunch —— !

"And to do it really well," added that nobleman. "A sort of little feast to celebrate my homecoming. The two teams —

and perhaps a dozen places for friends — ladies, the Vicar, and so on, eh, Dawson? Do you see the idea?"

Dawson saw the idea much more clearly than he saw most ideas. Almost corporeally he beheld the groaning board.

"On such an occasion, Dawson, we shouldn't quarrel about figures."

"Your lordship's always most liberal," Dawson acknowledged in tones which showed some trace of emotion.

"Put the matter in hand at once. But look here, I don't want it talked about. Just tell the secretary of the club — that's enough. Keep the tent empty till the moment comes. Then display your triumph! It'll be a pleasant little surprise for everybody, won't it?"

Dawson thought it would; at any rate it was one for him.

At this instant an elderly lady of demure appearance was observed to walk up to the lych-gate and enter the churchyard. Lynborough inquired of his companion who she was.

"That's Miss Gilletson from the Grange, my lord — the Marchesa's companion."

"Is it?" said Lynborough softly. "Oh, is it indeed?" He rose from his seat. "Good-by, Dawson. Mind — a dead secret, and a rattling good lunch!"

"I'll attend to it, my lord," Dawson assured him with the utmost cheerfulness. Never had Dawson invested a glass of beer to better profit!

Lynborough threw away his cigar and entered the sacred precincts. His brain was very busy. "Another wedge!" he was saying to himself. "Another wedge!"

The lady had gone into the church.

Lynborough went in too. He came first on Stabb — on his hands and knees, examining one of the old brasses and making copious notes in a pocket-book.

"Have you seen a lady come in, Cromlech?" asked Lord Lynborough.

"No, I haven't," said Cromlech, now producing a yard measure and proceeding to ascertain the dimensions of the brass.

"You wouldn't, if it were Venus herself," replied Lynborough pleasantly. "Well, I must look for her on my own account."

He found her in the neighborhood of his family monuments which, with his family pew, crowded the little chancel of the church. She was not employed in devotions, but was arranging some flowers in a vase — doubtless a pious offering. Somewhat at a loss how to open the conversation, Lynborough dropped his hat — or rather gave it a dex-

terous jerk, so that it fell at the lady's feet. Miss Gilletson started violently, and Lord Lynborough humbly apologized. Thence he glided into conversation, first about the flowers, then about the tombs. On the latter subject he was exceedingly interesting and informing.

"Dear, dear! Married the Duke of Dexminster's daughter, did he?" said Miss Gilletson, considerably thrilled. "She's not buried here, is she?"

"No, she's not," said Lynborough, suppressing the fact that the lady had run away after six months of married life. "And my own father's not buried here, either; he chose my mother's family place in Devonshire. I thought it rather a pity."

"Your own father?" Miss Gilleston gasped.

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know me," he

said, laughing. "I'm Lord Lynborough, you know. That's how I come to be so well up in all this. And I tell you what — I should like to show you some of our Scarsmoor roses on your way home."

"Oh, but if you're Lord Lynborough, I — I really couldn't —— "

"Who's to know anything about it, unless you choose, Miss Gilletson?" he asked with his ingratiating smile and his merry twinkle. "There's nothing so pleasant as a secret shared with a lady!"

It was a long time since a handsome man had shared a secret with Miss Gilletson. Who knows, indeed, whether such a thing had ever happened? Or whether Miss Gilletson had once just dreamed that some day it might — and had gone on dreaming for long, long days, till even the dream had slowly and sadly faded away? For some-

times it does happen like that. Lynborough meant nothing — but no possible effort (supposing he made it) could enable him to look as if he meant nothing. One thing at least he did mean — to make himself very pleasant to Miss Gilletson.

Interested knave! It is impossible to avoid that reflection. Yet let ladies in their turn ask themselves if they are over-scrupulous in their treatment of one man when their affections are set upon another.

He showed Miss Gilletson all the family tombs. He escorted her from the church. Under renewed vows of secrecy he induced her to enter Scarsmoor. Once in the gardens, the good lady was lost. They had no such roses at Nab Grange! Lynborough insisted on sending an enormous bouquet to the Vicar's wife in Miss Gilletson's name — and Miss Gilletson grew merry as she

pictured the mystification of the Vicar's wife. For Miss Gilletson herself he superintended the selection of a nosegay of the choicest blooms; they laughed again together when she hid them in a large bag she carried — destined for the tea and tobacco which represented her little charities. Then — after pausing for one private word in his gardener's ear, which caused a boy to be sent off post-haste to the stables — he led her to the road, and in vain implored her to honor his house by setting foot in it. There the fear of the Marchesa or (it is pleasanter to think) some revival of the sense of youth, bred by Lynborough's deferential courtliness, prevailed. They came together through his lodge gates; and Miss Gilletson's face suddenly fell.

"That wretched gate!" she cried. "It's locked — and I haven't got the key."

"No more have I, I'm sorry to say," said Lynborough. He, on his part, had forgotten nothing.

"It's nearly two miles round by the road --and so hot and dusty! — Really Helena does cut off her nose to spite her face!" Though, in truth, it appeared rather to be Miss Gilletson's nose the Marchesa had cut off.

A commiserating gravity sat on Lord Lynborough's attentive countenance.

"If I were younger, I'd climb that wall," declared Miss Gilletson. "As it is — well, but for your lovely flowers, I'd better have gone the other way after all."

"I don't want you to feel that," said he, almost tenderly.

"I must walk!"

"Oh no, you needn't," said Lynborough. As he spoke, there issued from the gates

behind them a luxurious victoria, drawn by two admirable horses. It came to a stand by Lynborough, the coachman touching his hat, the footman leaping to the ground.

"Just take Miss Gilletson to the Grange, Williams. Stop a little way short of the house. She wants to walk through the garden."

"Very good, my lord."

"Put up the hood, Charles. The sun's very hot for Miss Gilletson."

"Yes, my lord."

"Nobody'll see you if you get out a hundred yards from the door — and it's really better than tramping the road on a day like this. Of course, if Beach Path were open —!" He shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly.

Fear of the Marchesa struggled in Miss Gilletson's heart with the horror of the hot

and tiring walk — with the seduction of the shady, softly rolling, speedy carriage.

"If I met Helena!" she whispered; and the whisper was an admission of reciprocal confidence.

"It's the chance of that against the certainty of the tramp!"

"She didn't come down to breakfast this morning —— "

"Ah, didn't she?" Lynborough made a note for his Intelligence Department.

"Perhaps she isn't up yet! I — I think I'll take the risk."

Lynborough assisted her into the carriage.

"I hope we shall meet again," he said, with no small *empressement.*

"I'm afraid not," answered Miss Gilletson dolefully. "You see, Helena —— "

"Yes, yes; but ladies have their moods.

Anyhow you won't think too hardly of me, will you? I'm not altogether an ogre."

There was a pretty faint blush on Miss Gilletson's cheek as she gave him her hand. "An ogre! No, dear Lord Lynborough," she murmured.

"A wedge!" said Lynborough, as he watched her drive away.

He was triumphant with what he had achieved — he was full of hope for what he had planned. If he reckoned right, the loyalty of the ladies at Nab Grange to the mistress thereof was tottering, if it had not fallen. His relations with the men awaited the result of the cricket match. Yet neither his triumph nor his hope could in the nature of the case exist without an intermixture of remorse. He hurt — or tried to hurt — what he would please — and hoped to please. His mood was mixed, and his smile not al-

together mirthful as he stood looking at the fast-receding carriage.

Then suddenly, for the first time, he saw his enemy. Distantly — afar off! Yet without a doubt it was she. As he turned and cast his eyes over the forbidden path — the path whose seclusion he had violated, bold in his right — a white figure came to the sunk fence and stood there, looking not toward where he stood, but up to his castle on the hill. Lynborough edged near to the barricaded gate — a new padlock and new *chevaux-de-frise* of prickly branches guarded it. The latter, high as his head, screened him completely; he peered through the interstices in absolute security.

The white figure stood on the little bridge which led over the sunk fence into the meadow. He could see neither feature nor color; only the slender shape caught and chained

his eye. Tall she was, and slender, as his mocking forecast had prophesied. More than that he could not see.

Well, he did see one more thing. This beautiful shape, after a few minutes of what must be presumed to be meditation, raised its arm and shook its fist with decision at Scarsmoor Castle; then it turned and walked straight back to the Grange.

There was no sort of possibility of mistaking the nature or the meaning of the gesture.

It had the result of stifling Lynborough's softer mood, of reviving his pugnacity. "She must do more than that, if she's to win!" said he.

Chapter Eight

THE MARCHESA MOVES

After her demonstration against Scarsmoor Castle, the Marchesa went in to lunch. But there were objects of her wrath nearer home also. She received Norah's salute — they had not met before, that morning — with icy coldness.

"I'm better, thank you," she said, "but you must be feeling tired — having been up so very early in the morning! And you — Violet — have you been over to Scarsmoor again?"

Violet had heard from Norah all about the latter's morning adventure. They exchanged uneasy glances. Yet they were prepared to back one another up. The men looked more

frightened; men are frightened when women quarrel.

"One of you," continued the Marchesa accusingly, "pursues Lord Lynborough to his own threshold — the other flirts with him in my own meadow! Rather peculiar signs of friendship for me under the present circumstances — don't you think so, Colonel Wenman?"

The Colonel thought so — though he would have greatly preferred to be at liberty to entertain — or at least to express — no opinion on so thorny a point.

"Flirt with him? What do you mean?" But Norah's protest lacked the ring of honest indignation.

"Kissing one's hand to a mere stranger ——"

"How do you know that? You were in bed."

"Carlotta saw you from her window. You don't deny it?"

"No, I don't," said Norah, perceiving the uselessness of such a course. "In fact, I glory in it. I had a splendid time with Lord Lynborough. Oh, I did try to keep him out for you — but he jumped over my head."

Sensation among the gentlemen! Increased scorn on the Marchesa's face!

"And when I got John Goodenough to help me, he just laid John down on the grass as — as I lay that spoon on the table! He's splendid, Helena!"

"He seems a good sort of chap," said Irons thoughtfully.

The Marchesa looked at Wenman.

"Nothing to be said for the fellow, nothing at all," declared the Colonel hastily.

"Thank you, Colonel Wenman. I'm glad I have one friend left anyhow. Oh, besides

you, Mr. Stillford, of course. Oh, and you, dear old Jennie, of course. You wouldn't forsake me, would you?"

The tone of affection was calculated to gratify Miss Gilletson. But against it had to be set the curious and amused gaze of Norah and Violet. Seen by these two ladies in the act of descending from a stylish (and coroneted) victoria in the drive of Nab Grange, Miss Gilletson had, pardonably perhaps, broken down rather severely in cross-examination. She had been so very proud of the roses — so very full of Lord Lynborough's graces! She was conscious now that the pair held her in their hands and were demanding courage from her.

"Forsake you, dearest Helena? Of course not! There's no question of that with any of us."

"Yes — there is — with those of you who

make friends with that wretch at Scarsmoor!"

"Really, Helena, you shouldn't be so — so vehement. I'm not sure it's ladylike. It's absurd to call Lord Lynborough a wretch." The pale faint flush again adorned her fading cheeks. "I never met a man more thoroughly a gentleman."

"You never met —" began the Marchesa in petrified tones. "Then you have met — ?" Again her words died away.

Miss Gilletson took her courage in both hands.

"Circumstances threw us together. I behaved as a lady does under such circumstances, Helena. And Lord Lynborough was, under the circumstances, most charming, courteous, and considerate." She gathered more courage as she proceeded. "And really it's highly inconvenient having that gate

locked, Helena. I had to come all the way round by the road."

"I'm sorry if you find yourself fatigued," said the Marchesa with formal civility.

"I'm not fatigued, thank you, Helena. I should have been terribly — but for Lord Lynborough's kindness in sending me home in his carriage."

A pause followed. Then Norah and Violet began to giggle.

"It was so funny this morning!" said Norah — and boldly launched on a full story of her adventure. She held the attention of the table. The Marchesa sat in gloomy silence. Violet chimed in with more reminiscences of her visit to Scarsmoor; Miss Gilletson contributed new items, including that matter of the roses. Norah ended triumphantly with a eulogy on Lynborough's extraordinary physical powers.

Captain Irons listened with concealed interest. Even Colonel Wenman ventured to opine that the enemy was worth fighting. Stillford imitated his hostess's silence, but he was watching her closely. Would her courage — or her obstinacy — break down under these assaults, this lukewarmness, these desertions? In his heart, fearful of that lawsuit, he hoped so.

"I shall prosecute him for assaulting Goodenough," the Marchesa announced.

"Goodenough touched him first!" cried Norah.

"That doesn't matter, since I'm in the right. He had no business to be there. That's the law, isn't it, Mr. Stillford? Will he be sent to prison or only heavily fined?"

"Well — er — I'm rather afraid — neither, Marchesa. You see, he'll plead his right, and the Bench would refer us to our

civil remedy and dismiss the summons. At least that's my opinion."

"Of course that's right," pronounced Norah in an authoritative tone.

"If that's the English law," observed the Marchesa, rising from the table, "I greatly regret that I ever settled in England."

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Helena? Going to play tennis — or croquet?"

"I'm going for a walk, thank you, Violet." She paused for a moment and then added, "By myself."

"Oh, mayn't I have the privilege — ?" began the Colonel.

"Not to-day, thank you, Colonel Wenman. I — I have a great deal to think about. We shall meet again at tea — unless you're all going to tea at Scarsmoor Castle!" With this Parthian shot she left them.

She had indeed much to think of — and her reflections were not cast in a cheerful mold. She had underrated her enemy. It had seemed sufficient to lock the gate and to forbid Lynborough's entry. These easy measures had appeared to leave him no resource save blank violence: in that confidence she had sat still and done nothing. He had been at work — not by blank violence, but by cunning devices and subtle machinations. He had made a base use of his personal fascinations, of his athletic gifts, even of his lordly domain, his garden of roses, and his carriage. She perceived his strategy; she saw now how he had driven in his wedges. Her ladies had already gone over to his side; even her men were shaken. Stillford had always been lukewarm; Irons was fluttering round Lynborough's flame; Wenman might still be hers — but an

isolation mitigated only by Colonel Wenman seemed an isolation not mitigated in the least. When she had looked forward to a fight, it had not been to such a fight as this. An enthusiastic, hilarious, united Nab Grange was to have hurled laughing defiance at Scarsmoor Castle. Now more than half Nab Grange laughed — but its laughter was not at the Castle; its laughter, its pitying amusement, was directed at her; Lynborough's triumphant campaign drew all admiration. He had told Stillford that he would harry her; he was harrying her to his heart's content — and to a very soreness in hers.

For the path — hateful Beach Path which her feet at this moment trod — became now no more than an occasion for battle, a symbol of strife. The greater issue stood out. It was that this man had peremptorily challenged her to a fight — and was beating her!

And he won his victory, not by male violence in spite of male stupidity, but by just the arts and the cunning which should have been her own weapons. To her he left the blunt, the inept, the stupid and violent methods. He chose the more refined, and wielded them like a master. It was a position to which the Marchesa's experience had not accustomed her — one to which her spirit was by no means attuned.

What was his end — that end whose approach seemed even now clearly indicated? It was to convict her at once of cowardice and of pig-headedness, to exhibit her as afraid to bring him to book by law, and yet too churlish to cede him his rights. He would get all her friends to think that about her. Then she would be left alone — to fight a lost battle all alone.

Was he right in his charge? Did it truly

describe her conduct? For any truth there might be in it, she declared that he was himself to blame. He had forced the fight on her by his audacious demand for instant surrender; he had given her no fair time for consideration, no opportunity for a dignified retreat. He had offered her no choice save between ignominy and defiance. If she chose defiance, his rather than hers was the blame.

Suddenly — across these dismal broodings — there shot a new idea. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri;* she did not put it in Latin, but it came to the same thing — Couldn't she pay Lynborough back in his own coin? She had her resources — perhaps she had been letting them lie idle! Lord Lynborough did not live alone at Scarsmoor. If there were women open to his wiles at the Grange, were there no men open to hers at Scars-

moor? The idea was illuminating; she accorded it place in her thoughts.

She was just by the gate. She took our her key, opened the padlock, closed the gate behind her, but did not lock it, walked on to the road, and surveyed the territory of Scarsmoor.

Fate helps those who help themselves: her new courage of brain and heart had its reward. She had not been there above a minute when Roger Wilbraham came out from the Scarsmoor gates.

Lynborough had, he considered, done enough for one day. He was awaiting the results of to-morrow's manoeuvers anent the cricket match. But he amused himself after lunch by proffering to Roger a wager that he would not succeed in traversing Beach Path from end to end, and back again, alone, by his own unassisted efforts, and

without being driven to ignominious flight. Without a moment's hesitation Roger accepted. "I shall just wait till the coast's clear," he said.

"Ah, but they'll see you from the windows! They will be on the lookout," Lynborough retorted.

The Marchesa had strolled a little way down the road. She was walking back toward the gate when Roger first came in sight. He did not see her until after he had reached the gate. There he stood a moment, considering at what point to attack it — for the barricade was formidable. He came to the same conclusion as Lynborough had reached earlier in the day. "Oh, I'll jump the wall," he said.

"The gate isn't locked," remarked a charming voice just behind him.

He turned round with a start and saw —

he had no doubt whom she was. The Marchesa's tall slender figure stood before him — all in white, crowned by a large, yet simple, white hat; her pale olive cheeks were tinged with underlying red (the flush of which Lynborough had dreamed!); her dark eyes rested on the young man with a kindly languid interest; her very red lips showed no smile, yet seemed to have one in ready ambush. Roger was overcome; he blushed and stood silent before the vision.

"I expect you're going to bathe? Of course this is the shortest way, and I shall be so glad if you'll use it. I'm going to the Grange myself, so I can put you on your way."

Roger was honest. "I — I'm staying at the Castle."

"I'll tell somebody to be on the lookout and open the gate for you when you come back," said she.

If Norah was no match for Lynborough, Roger was none for the Marchesa's practised art.

"You're — you're awfully kind. I — I shall be delighted, of course."

The Marchesa passed through the gate. Roger followed. She handed him the key.

"Will you please lock the padlock? It's not — safe — to leave the gate open."

Her smile had come into the open — it was on the red lips now! For all his agitation Roger was not blind to its meaning. His hand was to lock the gate against his friend and chief! But the smile and the eyes commanded. He obeyed.

It was the first really satisfactory moment which the contest had brought to the Marchesa — some small instalment of consolation for the treason of her friends.

Roger had been honestly in love once with

a guileless maiden — who had promptly and quite unguilefully refused him; his experience did not at all fit him to cope with the Marchesa. She, of course, was merciless: was he not of the hated house? As an individual, however, he appeared to be comely and agreeable.

They walked on side by side — not very quickly. The Marchesa's eyes were now downcast. Roger was able to steal a glance at her profile; he could compare it to nothing less than a Roman Empress on an ancient silver coin.

"I suppose you've been taught to think me a very rude and unneighborly person, haven't you, Mr. Wilbraham? At least I suppose you're Mr. Wilbraham? You don't look old enough to be that learned Mr. Stabb the Vicar told me about. Though he said Mr. Stabb was absolutely delightful! —

how I should love to know him, if only — !" She broke off, sighing deeply.

"Yes, my name's Wilbraham. I'm Lynborough's secretary. But — er — I don't think anything of that sort about you. And — and I've never heard Lynborough say anything — er — unkind."

"Oh, Lord Lynborough!" She gave a charming little shrug, accompanied with what Roger, from his novel-reading, conceived to be a *moue*.

"Of course I — I know that you — you think you're right," he stammered.

She stopped on the path. "Yes, I do think I'm right, Mr. Wilbraham. But that's not it. If it were merely a question of right, it would be unneighborly to insist. I'm not hurt by Lord Lynborough's using this path. But I'm hurt by Lord Lynborough's discourtesy. In my country women are treated

with respect — even sometimes (she gave a bitter little laugh) with deference, That doesn't seem to occur to Lord Lynborough."

"Well, you know ——"

"Oh, I can't let you say a word against him, whatever you may be obliged to think. In your position — as his friend — that would be disloyal; and the one thing I dislike is disloyalty. Only I was anxious" — she turned and faced him — "that you should understand my position — and that Mr. Stabb should too. I shall be very glad if you and Mr. Stabb will use the path whenever you like. If the gate's locked you can manage the wall!"

"I'm — I'm most awfully obliged to you — er — Marchesa — but you see ——"

"No more need be said about that, Mr. Wilbraham. You're heartily welcome. Lord Lynborough would have been heartily welcome too, if he would have approached me

properly. I was open to discussion. I received orders. I don't take orders — not even from Lord Lynborough."

She looked splendid — so Roger thought. The underlying red dyed the olive to a brighter hue; her eyes were very proud; the red lips shut decisively. Just like a Roman Empress! Then her face underwent a rapid transformation; the lips parted, the eyes laughed, the cheeks faded to hues less stormy, yet not less beautiful. (These are recorded as Mr. Wilbraham's impressions.) Lightly she laid the tips of her fingers on his arm for just a moment.

"There — don't let's talk any more about disagreeable things," she said. "It's too beautiful an afternoon. Can you spare just five minutes? The strawberries are splendid! I want some — and it's so hot to pick them for one's self!"

Roger paused, twisting the towel round his neck.

"Only five minutes!" pleaded — yes, pleaded — the beautiful Marchesa. "Then you can go and have your swim in peace."

It was a question whether poor Roger was to do anything more in peace that day — but he went and picked the strawberries.

Chapter Nine

LYNBOROUGH DROPS A CATCH

"Something has happened!" (So Lynborough records the same evening.) "I don't know precisely what — but I think that the enemy is at last in motion. I'm glad. I was being too successful. I had begun to laugh at her — and that only. I prefer the admixture of another element of emotion. All that ostensibly appears is that I have lost five shillings to Roger. 'You did it?' I asked. 'Certainly,' said Roger. 'I went at my ease and came back at my ease, and —' I interrupted, 'Nobody stopped you?' Nobody made any objection,' said Roger. 'You took your time,' says I. 'You were

away three hours. 'The water was very pleasant this afternoon,' says Roger. Hum! I hand over my two half-crowns, which Roger pockets with a most peculiar sort of smile. There that incident appears to end — with a comment from me that the Marchesa's garrison is not very alert. Another smile — not less peculiar — from Roger! *Hum!*

"Then Cromlech! I trust Cromlech as myself — that is, as far as I can see him. He has no secrets from me — that I know of; I have none from him — which would be at all likely to interest him. Yet, soon after Roger's return, Cromlech goes out! And they had been alone together for some minutes, as I happen to have observed. Cromlech is away an hour and a half! If I were not a man of honor, I would have trained the telescope on to him. I refrained. Where was

Cromlech? At the church, he told me. I accept his word — but the church has had a curious effect upon him. Sometimes he is silent, sulky, reflective, embarrassed — constantly rubbing the place where his hair ought to be — not altogether too civil to me either. Anon, sits with a fat happy smile on his face! Has he found a new tomb? No; he'd tell me about a new tomb. What has happened to Cromlech?

"At first sight Violet — the insinuating one — would account for the phenomena. Or Norah's eyes and lashes? Yet I hesitate. Woman, of course, it is, with both of them. Violet might make men pleased with themselves; Norah could make them merry and happy. Yet these two are not so much pleased with themselves — rather they are pleased with events; they are not merry — they are thoughtful. And I think they are resentful. I

believe the hostile squadron has weighed anchor. In these great results, achieved so quickly, demanding on my part such an effort in reply, I see the Marchesa's touch! I have my own opinion as to what has happened to Roger and to Cromlech. Well, we shall see — to-morrow is the cricket match!"

"*Later.* I had closed this record; I was preparing to go to bed (wishing to bathe early to-morrow) when I found that I had forgotten to bring up my book. Coltson had gone to bed — or out — anyhow, away. I went down myself. The library door stood ajar; I had on my slippers; a light burned still; Cromlech and Roger were up. As I approached — with an involuntary noiselessness (I really couldn't be expected to think of coughing, in my own house and with no ladies about) — I overheard this

remarkable, most significant, most important conversation:

"*Cromlech:* 'On my soul, there were tears in her eyes!'

"*Roger:* 'Stabb, can we as gentlemen — ?'

"Then, as I presume, the shuffle of my slippers became audible. I went in; both drank whisky-and-soda in a hurried fashion. I took my book from the table. Naught said I. Their confusion was obvious. I cast on them one of my looks; Roger blushed, Stabb shuffled his feet. I left them.

" 'Tears in her eyes!' 'Can we as gentlemen?'

"The Marchesa moves slowly, but she moves in force!"

It is unnecessary to pursue the diary further; for his lordship — forgetful apparently of the borne of bed, to which he had originally destined himself — launches into

a variety of speculations as to the Nature of Love. Among other questions, he puts to himself the following concerning Love: (1) Is it Inevitable? (2) Is it Agreeable? (3) Is it Universal? (4) Is it Wise? (5) Is it Remunerative? (6) Is it Momentary? (7) Is it Sempiternal? (8) Is it Voluntary? (9) Is it Conditioned? (10) Is it Remediable? (11) Is it Religious? (There's a note here — "Consult Cromlech") — (12) May it be expected to survive the Advance of Civilization? (13) Why does it exist at all? (14) Is it Ridiculous?

It is not to be inferred that Lord Lynborough answers these questions. He is, like a wise man, content to propound them. If, however, he had answered them, it might have been worth while to transcribe the diary.

"Can we as gentlemen — ?" — Roger had put the question. It waited unanswered

till Lynborough had taken his book and returned to record its utterance — together with the speculations to which that utterance gave rise. Stabb weighed it carefully, rubbing his bald head, according to the habit which his friend had animadverted upon.

"If such a glorious creature —" cried Roger.

"If a thoroughly intelligent and most sympathetic woman —" said Stabb.

"Thinks that she has a right, why, she probably has one!"

"At any rate her view is entitled to respect — to a courteous hearing."

"Lynborough does appear to have been a shade — er ——"

"Ambrose is a spoiled child, bless him! She took a wonderful interest in my brasses. I don't know what brought her to the church."

"She waited herself to let me through that beastly gate again;!"

"She drove me round herself to our gates. Wouldn't come through Scarsmoor!"

They both sighed. They both thought of telling the other something — but on second thoughts refrained.

"I suppose we'd better go to bed. Shall you bathe to-morrow morning?"

"With Ambrose? No, I sha'n't, Wilbraham."

"No more shall I. Good-night, Stabb. You'll — think it over?"

Stabb grunted inarticulately. Roger drew the blind aside for a moment, looked down on Nab Grange, saw a light in one window — and went to bed. The window was, in objective fact (if there be such a thing), Colonel Wenman's. No matter. There nothing is but thinking makes it so. The Colonel

was sitting up, writing a persuasive letter to his tailor. He served emotions that he did not feel; it is a not uncommon lot.

Lynborough's passing and repassing to and from his bathing were uninterrupted next morning. Nab Grange seemed wrapped in slumber; only Goodenough saw him, and Goodenough did not think it advisable to interrupt his ordinary avocations. But an air of constraint — even of mystery — marked both Stabb and Roger at breakfast. The cricket match was naturally the topic — though Stabb declared that he took little interest in it and should probably not be there.

"There'll be some lunch, I suppose," said Lynborough carelessly. "You'd better have lunch there — it'd be dull for you all by yourself here, Cromlech."

After apparent consideration Stabb con-

ceded that he might take luncheon on the cricket ground; Roger, as a member of the Fillby team, would, of course, do likewise.

The game was played in a large field, pleasantly surrounded by a belt of trees, and lying behind the Lynborough Arms. Besides Roger and Lynborough, Stillford and Irons represented Fillby. Easthorpe Polytechnic came in full force, save for an umpire. Colonel Wenman, who had walked up with his friends, was pressed into this honorable and responsible service, landlord Dawson officiating at the other end. Lynborough's second gardener, a noted fast bowler, was Fillby's captain; Easthorpe was under the command of a curate who had played several times for his University, although he had not actually achieved his "blue." Easthorpe won the toss and took first innings.

The second gardener, aware of his employer's turn of speed, sent Lord Lynborough to field "in the country." That gentleman was well content; few balls came his way and he was at leisure to contemplate the exterior of the luncheon tent — he had already inspected the interior thereof with sedulous care and high contentment — and to speculate on the probable happenings of the luncheon hour. So engrossed was he that only a rapturous cheer, which rang out from the field and the spectators, apprised him of the fact that the second gardener had yorked the redoubtable curate with the first ball of his second over! Young Woodwell came in; he was known as a mighty hitter; Lynborough was signaled to take his position yet deeper in the field. Young Woodwell immediately got to business — but he kept the ball low. Lynborough had,

however, the satisfaction of saving several "boundaries." Roger, keeping wicket, observed his chief's exertions with some satisfaction. Other wickets fell rapidly — but young Woodwell's score rapidly mounted up. If he could stay in, they would make a hundred — and Filby looked with just apprehension on a score like that. The second gardener, who had given himself a brief rest, took the ball again with an air of determination.

"Peters doesn't seem to remember that I also bowl," reflected Lord Lynborough.

The next moment he was glad of this omission. Young Woodwell was playing for safety now — his fifty loomed ahead! Lynborough had time for a glance round. He saw Stabb saunter on to the field; then — just behind where he stood when the second gardener was bowling from the Lynborough

Arms end of the field — a wagonette drove up. Four ladies descended. A bench was placed at their disposal, and the two men-servants at once began to make preparations for lunch, aided therein by the ostler from the Lynborough Arms, who rigged up a table on trestles under a spreading tree.

Lord Lynborough's reputation as a sportsman inevitably suffers from this portion of the narrative. Yet extenuating circumstances may fairly be pleaded. He was deeply interested in the four ladies who sat behind him on the bench; he was vitally concerned in the question of the lunch. As he walked back, between the overs, to his position, he could see that places were being set for some half-dozen people. Would there be half-a-dozen there? As he stood, watching, or trying to watch, young Woodwell's dangerous bat, he overheard fragments of conver-

sation wafted from the bench. The ladies were too far from him to allow of their faces being clearly seen, but it was not hard to recognize their figures.

The last man in had joined young Woodwell. That hero's score was forty-eight, the total ninety-three. The second gardener was tempting the Easthorpe champion with an occasional slow ball; up to now young Woodwell had declined to hit at these deceivers.

Suddenly Lynborough heard the ladies' voices quite plainly. They — or some of them — had left the bench and come nearer to the boundary. Irresistibly drawn by curiosity, for an instant he turned his head. At the same instant the second gardener delivered a slow ball — a specious ball. This time young Woodwell fell into the snare. He jumped out and opened his shoulders to

it. He hit it — but he hit it into the air. It soared over the bowler's head and came traveling through high heaven toward Lord Lynborough.

"Look out!" cried the second gardener. Lynborough's head spun round again — but his nerves were shaken. His eyes seemed rather in the back of his head, trying to see the Marchesa's face, than fixed on the ball that was coming toward him. He was in no mood for bringing off a safe catch!

Silence reigned, the ball began to drop. Lynborough had an instant to wait for it. He tried to think of the ball and the ball only.

It fell — it fell into his hands; he caught it — fumbled it — caught it — fumbled it again — and at last dropped it on the grass! "Oh!" went in a long-drawn expostulation round the field; and Lynborough heard a voice say plainly:

"Who is that stupid clumsy man?" The voice was the Marchesa's.

He wheeled round sharply — but her back was turned. He had not seen her face after all!

"Over!" was called. Lynborough apologized abjectly to the second gardener.

"The sun was in my eyes, Peters, and dazzled me," he pleaded.

"Looks to *me* as if the sun was shining the other way, my lord," said Peters dryly. And so, in physical fact, it was.

In Peters' next over Lynborough atoned — for young Woodwell had got his fifty and grown reckless. A one-handed catch, wide on his left side, made the welkin ring with applause. The luncheon bell rang too — for the innings was finished. Score 101. Last man out 52. Jim (office-boy at Polytechnic) not out 0. Young Woodwell received

a merited ovation — and Lord Lynborough hurried to the luncheon tent. The Marchesa, with an exceedingly dignified mien, repaired to her table under the spreading oak.

Mr. Dawson had done himself more than justice; the repast was magnificent. When Stillford and Irons saw it, they became more sure than ever what their duty was, more convinced still that the Marchesa would understand. Colonel Wenman became less sure what his duty was — previously it had appeared to him that it was to lunch with the Marchesa. But the Marchesa had spoken of a few sandwiches and perhaps a bottle of claret. Stillford told him that, as umpire, he ought to lunch with the teams. Irons declared it would look "deuced standoffish" if he didn't. Lynborough, who appeared to act as deputy-landlord to Mr.

Dawson, pressed him into a chair with a friendly hand.

"Well, she'll have the ladies with her, won't she?" said the Colonel, his last scruple vanishing before a large jug of hock-cup, artfully iced. The Nab Grange contingent fell to.

Just then — when they were irrevocably committed to this feast — the flap of the tent was drawn back, and Lady Norah's face appeared. Behind her stood Violet and Miss Gilletson. Lynborough ran forward to meet them.

"Here we are, Lord Lynborough," said Norah. "The Marchesa was so kind, she told us to do just as we liked, and we thought it would be such fun to lunch with the cricketers."

"The cricketers are immensely honored. Let me introduce you to our captain, Mr.

Peters. You must sit by him, you know. And, Miss Dufaure, will you sit by Mr. Jeffreys? — he's their captain — Miss Dufaure — Mr. Jeffreys. You, Miss Gilletson, must sit between Mr. Dawson and me. Now we're right — What, Colonel Wenman? — What's the matter?"

Wenman had risen from his place. "The — the Marchesa!" he said. "We — we can't leave her to lunch alone!"

Lady Norah broke in again. "Oh, Helena expressly said that she didn't expect the gentlemen. She knows what the custom is, you see."

The Marchesa had, no doubt, made all these speeches. It may, however, be doubted whether Norah reproduced exactly the manner, and the spirit, in which she made them. But the iced hock-cup settled the Colonel. With a relieved sigh he resumed

his place. The business of the moment went on briskly for a quarter of an hour.

Mr. Dawson rose, glass in hand. "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "I'm no hand at a speech, but I give you the health of our kind neighbor and good host to-day — Lord Lynborough. Here's to his lordship!"

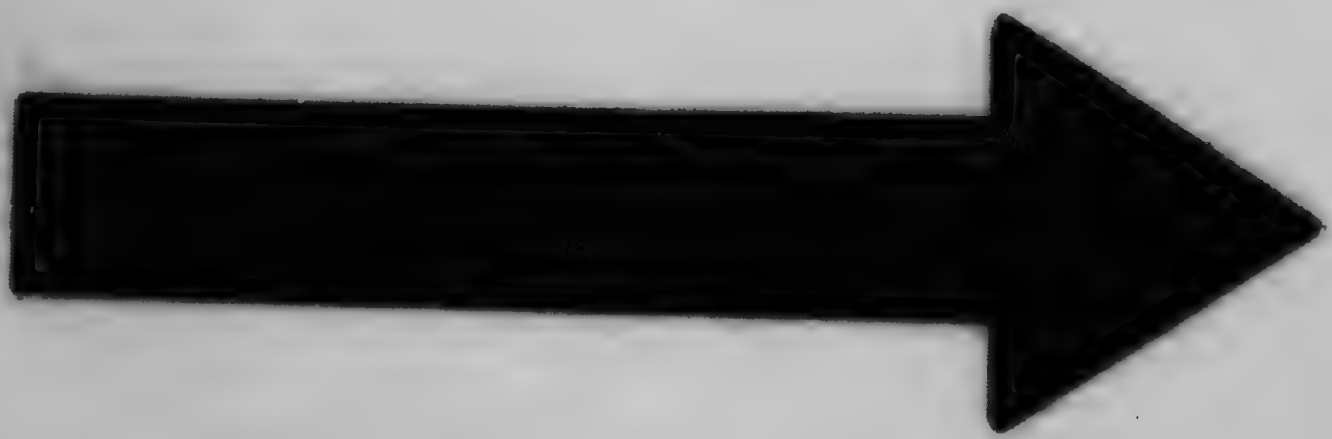
"I — I didn't know he was giving the lunch!" whispered Colonel Wenman.

"Is it his lunch?" said Irons, nudging Stillford.

Stillford laughed. "It looks like it. And we can hardly throw him over the hedge after this!"

"Well, he seems to be a jolly good chap," said Captain Irons.

Lynborough bowed his acknowledgments, and flirted with Miss Gilletson; his face wore a contented smile. Here they all were — and the Marchesa lunched alone on the other



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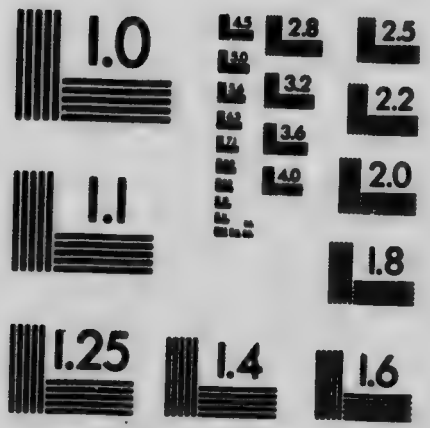

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side of the field! Here indeed was a new wedge! Here was the isolation at which his diabolical schemes had aimed. He had captured Nab Grange! Bag and baggage they had come over — and left their chieftainess deserted.

Then suddenly — in the midst of his triumph — in the midst too of a certain not ungenerous commiseration which he felt that he could extend to a defeated enemy and to beauty in distress — he became vaguely aware of a gap in his company. Stabb was not there! Yet Stabb had come upon the ground. He searched the company again. No, Stabb was not there. Moreover — a fact the second search revealed — Roger Wilbraham was not there. Roger was certainly not there; yet, whatever Stabb might do, Roger would never miss lunch!

Lynborough's eyes grew thoughtful; he

pursed up his lips. Miss Gilletson noticed that he became silent.

He could bear the suspense no longer. On a pretext of looking for more bottled beer, he rose and walked to the door of the tent.

Under the spreading tree the Marchesa lunched — not in isolation, not in gloom. She had company — and, even as he appeared, a merry peal of laughter was wafted by a favoring breeze across the field of battle. Stabb's ponderous figure, Roger Wilbraham's highly recognizable "blazer," told the truth plainly.

Lord Lynborough was not the only expert in the art of driving wedges!

"Well played, Helena!" he said under his breath.

The rest of the cricket match interested him very little. Successful beyond their

expectations, Fillby won by five runs (Wilbraham not out thirty-seven) — but Lynborough's score did not swell the victorious total. In Easthorpe's second innings — which could not affect the result — Peters let him bowl, and he got young Woodwell's wicket. That was a distinction; yet, looking at the day as a whole, he had scored less than he expected.

Chapter Ten

IN THE LAST RESORT!

It will have been perceived by now that Lord Lynborough delighted in a fight. He revelled in being opposed; the man who withstood him to the face gave him such pleasure as to beget in his mind certainly gratitude, perhaps affection, or at least a predisposition thereto. There was nothing he liked so much as an even battle — unless, by chance, it were the scales seeming to incline a little against him. Then his spirits rose highest, his courage was most buoyant, his kindliness most sunny.

The benefit of this disposition accrued to the Marchesa; for by her sudden counter-attach she had at least redressed the balance

of the campaign. He could not be sure that she had not done more. The ladies of her party were his — he reckoned confidently on that; but the men he could not count as more than neutral at the best; Wenman, anyhow, could easily be whistled back to the Marchesa's heel. But in his own house, he admitted at once, she had secured for him open hostility, for herself the warmest of partisanship. The meaning of her lunch was too plain to doubt. No wonder her opposition to her own deserters had been so faint; no wonder she had so readily, even if so scornfully, afforded them the pretext — the barren verbal permission — that they had required. She had not wanted them — no, not even the Colonel himself! She had wanted to be alone with Roger and with Stabb — and to complete the work of her blandishments on those guileless, tender-

hearted, and susceptible persons. Lynborough admired, applauded, and promised himself considerable entertainment at dinner.

How was the Marchesa, in her turn, bearing her domestic isolation, the internal disaffection at Nab Grange? He flattered himself that she would not be finding in it such pleasure as his whimsical temper reaped from the corresponding position of affairs at Scarsmoor.

There he was right. At Nab Grange the atmosphere was not cheerful. Not to want a thing by no means implies an admission that you do not want it; that is elementary diplomacy. Rather do you insist that you want it very much; if you do not get it, there is a grievance — and a grievance is a mighty handy article of barter. The Marchesa knew all that.

The deserters were severely lashed. The Marchesa had said that she did not expect Colonel Wenman; ought she to have sent a message to say that she was pining for him — must that be wrung from her before he would condescend to come? She had said that she knew the custom with regard to lunch at cricket matches; was that to say that she expected it to be observed to her manifest and public humiliation? She had told Miss Gilletson and the girls to please themselves; of course she wished them to do that always. Yet it might be a wound to find that their pleasure lay in abandoning their friend and hostess, in consorting with her arch-enemy, and giving him a triumph.

"Well, what do you say about Wilbraham and Stabb?" cried the trampled Colonel.

"I say that they're gentlemen," retorted the Marchesa. "They saw the position I

was in — an' they saved me from humiliation."

That was enough for the men; men are, after all, poor fighters. It was not, however, enough for Lady Norah Mountliffey — a woman — and an Irishwoman to boot!

"Are you really asking us to believe that you hadn't arranged it with them beforehand?" she inquired scornfully.

"Oh, I don't ask you to believe anything I say," returned the Marchesa, dexterously avoiding saying anything on the point suggested.

"The truth is, you're being very absurd, Helena," Norah pursued. "If you've got a right, go to law with Lord Lynborough and make him respect it. If you haven't got a right, why go on making yourself ridiculous and all the rest of us very uncomfortable?"

It was obvious that the Marchesa might

reply that any guest of hers who felt himself or herself uncomfortable at Nab Grange had, in his or her own hand, the easy remedy. She did not do that. She did a thing more disconcerting still. Though the mutton had only just been put on the table, she pushed back her chair, rose to her feet, and fled from the room very hastily.

Miss Gilletson sprang up. But Noran was beforehand with her.

"No! I said it. I'm the one to go. Who could think she'd take it like that?" Norah's own blue eyes were less bright than usual as she hurried after her wounded friend. The rest ate on in dreary conscience-stricken silence. At last Stillford spoke.

"Don't urge her to go to law," he said. "I'm pretty sure she'd be beaten."

"Then she ought to give in — and apologize to Lord Lynborough," said Miss

Gilletson decisively. "That would be right — and, I will add, Christian."

"Humble Pie ain't very good eating," commented Captain Irons

Neither the Marchesa nor Norah came back. The meal wended along its slow and melancholy course to a mirthless weary conclusion. Colonel Wenman began to look on the repose of bachelorhood with a kinder eye, on its loneliness with a more tolerant disposition. He went so far as to remember that, if the worst came to the worst, he had another invitation for the following week.

The Spirit of Discord (The tragic atmosphere now gathering justifies these figures of speech — the chronicler must rise to the occasion of a heroine in tears), having wrought her fell work at Nab Grange, now winged her way to the towers of Scarsmoor Castle.

Dinner had passed off quite as Lynborough anticipated; he had enjoyed himself exceedingly. Whenever the temporary absence of the servants allowed, he had rallied his friends on their susceptibility to beauty, on their readiness to fail him under its lures, on their clumsy attempts at concealment of their growing intimacy, and their confidential relations, with the fascinating mistress of Nab Grange. He too had been told to take his case into the Courts or to drop his claim — and had laughed triumphantly at the advice. He had laughed when Stabb said that he really could not pursue his work in the midst of such distractions, that his mind was too perturbed for scientific thought. He had laughed lightly and good-humoredly even when (as they were left alone over coffee) Roger Wilbraham, going suddenly a little white, said he thought that persecut-

ing a lady was no fit amusement for a gentleman. Lynborough did not suppose that the Marchesa — with the battle of the day at least drawn, if not decided in her favor — could be regarded as the subject of persecution — and he did recognize that young fellows, under certain spells, spoke hotly and were not to be held to serious account. He was smiling still when, with a forced remark about the heat, the pair went out together to smoke on the terrace. He had some letters to read, and for the moment dismissed the matter from his mind.

In ten minutes young Roger Wilbraham returned; his manner was quiet now, but his face still rather pale. He came up to the table by which Lynborough sat.

"Holding the position I do in your house, Lord Lynborough," he said, "I had no right to use the words I used this evening at

dinner. I apologize for them. But, on the other hand, I have no wish to hold a position which prevents me from using those words when they represent what I think. I beg you to accept my resignation, and I shall be greatly obliged if you can arrange to relieve me of my duties as soon as possible."

Lynborough heard him without interruption; with grave impassive face, with surprise, pity, and a secret amusement. Even if he were right, he was so solemn over it!

The young man waited for no answer. With the merest indication of a bow, he left Lynborough alone, and passed on into the house.

"Well, now!" said Lord Lynborough, rising and lighting a cigar. "This Marchesa! Well, now!"

Stabb's heavy form came lumbering in from the terrace; he seemed to move more

heavily than ever, as though his bulk were even unusually inert. He plumped down into a chair and looked up at Lynborough's graceful figure.

"I meant what I said at dinner, Ambrose. I wasn't joking, though I suppose you thought I was. All this affair may amuse you — it worries me. I can't settle to work. If you'll be so kind as to send me over to Easthorpe to-morrow, I'll be off — back to Oxford."

"Cromlech, old boy!"

"Yes, I know. But I — I don't want to stay, Ambrose. I'm not — comfortable." His great face set in a heavy, disconsolate, wrinkled frown.

Lord Lynborough pursed his lips in a momentary whistle, then put his cigar back into his mouth, and walked out on to the terrace.

"This Marchesa!" said he again. "This very remarkable Marchesa! Her *riposte* is admirable. Really I venture to hope that I, in my turn, have very seriously disturbed her household!"

He walked to the edge of the terrace, and stood there musing. Sandy Nab loomed up, dimly the sea rose and fell, twinkled and sank into darkness. It talked too — talked to Lynborough with a soft, low, quiet voice; it seemed (to his absurdly whimsical imagination) as though some lovely woman gently stroked his brow and whispered to him. He liked to encourage such freaks of fancy.

Cromlech couldn't go. That was absurd.

And the young fellow? So much a gentleman! Lynborough had liked the terms of his apology no less than the firmness of his protest. "It's the first time, I think, that I've been told that I'm no gentleman," he re-

flected with amusement. But Roger had been pale when he said it. Imaginatively Lynborough assumed his place. "A brave boy," he said. "And that dear old knight-errant of a Cromlech!"

A space — room indeed and room enough — for the softer emotions — so much Lynborough was ever inclined to allow. But to acquiesce in this state of things as final — that was to admit defeat at the hands of the Marchesa. It was to concede that one day had changed the whole complexion of the fight.

"Cromlech sha'n't go — the boy sha'n't go — and I'll still use the path," he thought. "Not that I really care about the path, you know." He paused. "Well, yes, I do care about it — for bathing in the morning." He hardened his heart against the Marchesa. She chose to fight; the fortune of war must

be hers. He turned his eyes down to Nab Grange. Lights burned there — were her guests demanding to be sent to Easthorpe? Why, no! As he looked, Lynborough came to the conclusion that she had reduced them all to order — that they would be whipped back to heel — that his manoeuvers (and his lunch!) had probably been wasted. He was beaten then?

He scorned the conclusion. But if he were not — the result was deadlock! Then still he was beaten; for unless Helena (he called her that) owned his right, his right was to him as nothing.

"I have made myself a champion of my sex," he said. "Shall I be beaten?"

In that moment — with all the pang of forsaking an old conviction — of disowning that stronger tie, the loved embrace of an ancient and perversely championed prejudice

— he declared that any price must be paid for victory.

"Heaven forgive me, but, sooner than be beaten, I'll go to law with her!" he cried.

A face appeared from between two bushes — a voice spoke from the edge of the terrace.

"I thought you might be interested to hear ——"

"Lady Norah?"

"Yes, it's me — to hear that you've made her cry — and very bitterly."

Chapter Eleven

AN ARMISTICE

Lord Lynborough walked down to the edge of the terrace; Lady Norah stood half hidden in the shrubbery.

"And that, I suppose, ought to end the matter?" he asked. "I ought at once to abandon all my pretensions and to give up my path?"

"I just thought you might like to know it," said Norah.

"Actually I believe I do like to know it — though what Roger would say to me about that I really can't imagine. You're mistaking my character, Lady Norah. I'm not the hero of this piece. There are several

gentlemen from among whom you can choose one for that effective part. Lots of candidates for it! But I'm the villain. Consequently you must be prepared for my receiving your news with devilish glee."

"Well, you haven't seen it — and I have."

"Well put!" he allowed. "How did it happen?"

"Over something I said to her — something horrid."

"Well, then, why am I — ?" Lynborough's hands expostulated eloquently.

"But you were the real reason, of course. She thinks you've turned us all against her; she says it's so mean to get her own friends to turn against her."

"Does she now?" asked Lord Lynborough with a thoughtful smile.

Norah too smiled faintly. "She says she's

not angry with us — she's just sorry for us — because she understands ——"

"What?"

"I mean she says she — she can imagine — " Norah's smile grew a little more pronounced. "I'm not sure she'd like me to repeat that," said Norah. "And of course she doesn't know I'm here at all — and you must never tell her."

"Of course it's all my fault. Still, as a matter of curiosity, what did you say to her?"

"I said that, if she had a good case, she ought to go to law; and, if she hadn't, she ought to stop making herself ridiculous and the rest of us uncomfortable."

"You spoke with the general assent of the company?"

"I said what I thought — yes, I think they all agreed — but she took it — well, in the way I've told you, you know."

Lady Norah had, in the course of conversation, insensibly advanced on to the terrace. She stood there now beside Lynborough.

"How do you think I'm taking it?" he asked. "Doesn't my fortitude wring applause from you?"

"Taking what?"

"Exactly the same thing from my friends. They tell me to go to law if I've got a case — and at any rate to stop persecuting a lady. And they've both given me warning."

"Mr. Stabb and Mr. Wilbraham? They're going away?"

"So it appears. Carry back those tidings. Won't they dry the Marchesa's tears?"

Norah looked at him with a smile. "Well, it is pretty clever of her, isn't it?" she said. "I didn't think she'd got along as quickly

as that!" Norah's voice was full of an honest and undisguised admiration.

"It's a little unreasonable of her to cry under the circumstances. I'm not crying, Lady Norah."

"I expect you're rather disgusted, though, aren't you?" she suggested.

"I'm a little vexed at having to surrender — for the moment — a principle which I've held dear — at having to give my enemies an occasion for mockery. But I must bow to my friends' wishes. I can't lose them under such painful circumstances. No, I must yield, Lady Norah."

"You're going to give up the path?" she cried, not sure whether she were pleased or not with his determination.

"Dear me, no! I'm going to law about it."

Open dismay was betrayed in her excla-

mation: "Oh, but what will Mr. Stillford say to that?"

Lynborough laughed. Norah saw her mistake — but she made no attempt to remedy it. She took up another line of tactics. "It would all come right if only you knew one another! She's the most wonderful woman in the world, Lord Lynborough. And you ——"

"Well, what of me?" he asked in deceitful gravity.

Norah parried, with a hasty little laugh; "Just ask Miss Gilletson that!"

Lynborough smiled for a moment, then took a turn along the terrace, and came back to her.

"You must tell her that you've seen me ——"

"I couldn't do that!"

"You must — or here the matter ends,

and I shall be forced to go to law — ugh! Tell her you've seen me, and that I'm open to reason —— "

"Lord Lynborough! How can I tell her that?"

"That I'm open to reason, and that I propose an armistice. Not peace — not yet, anyhow — but an armistice. I undertake not to exercise my right over Beach Path for a week from to-day, and before the end of that week I will submit a proposal to the Marchesa."

Norah saw a gleam of hope. "Very well. I don't know what she'll say to me, but I'll tell her that. Thank you. You'll make it a — a pleasant proposal?"

"I haven't had time to consider the proposal yet. She must inform me to-morrow morning whether she accepts the armistice."

He suddenly turned to the house, and shouted up to a window above his head, "Roger!"

The window was open. Roger Wilbraham put his head out.

"Come down," said Lynborough. "Here's somebody wants to see you."

"I never said I did, Lord Lynborough."

"Let him take you home. He wants cheering up."

"I like him very much. He won't really leave you, will he?"

"I want you to persuade him to stay during the armistice. I'm too proud to ask him for myself. I shall think very little of you, however, if he doesn't."

Roger appeared. Lynborough told him that Lady Norah required an escort back to Nab Grange; for obvious reasons he himself was obliged to relinquish the pleasure;

Roger, he felt sure, would be charmed to take his place. Roger was somewhat puzzled by the turn of events, but delighted with his mission.

Lynborough saw them off, went into the library, sat down at his writing-table, and laid paper before him. But he sat idle for many minutes. Stabb came in, his arms full of books.

"I think I left some of my stuff here," he said, avoiding Lynborough's eye. "I'm just getting it together."

"Drop that lot too. You're not going to-morrow, Cromlech, there's an armistice."

Stabb put his books down on the table, and came up to him with outstretched hand. Lynborough leaned back, his hands clasped behind his head.

"Wait for a week," he said. "We may, Cromlech, arrive at an accommodation.

Meanwhile, for that week, I do not use the path."

"I've been feeling pretty badly, Ambrose."

"Yes, I don't think it's safe to expose you to the charms of beauty." He looked at his friend in good-natured mockery. "Return to your tombs in peace."

The next morning he received a communication from Nab Grange. It ran as follows:

"The Marchesa di San Servolo presents her compliments to Lord Lynborough. The Marchesa will be prepared to consider any proposal put forward by Lord Lynborough, and will place no hindrance in the way of Lord Lynborough's using the path across her property if it suits his convenience to do so in the meantime."

"No, no!" said Lynborough, as he took a sheet of paper.

"Lord Lynborough presents his compliments to her Excellency the Marchesa di San Servolo. Lord Lynborough will take an early opportunity of submitting his proposal to the Marchesa di San Servolo. He is obliged for the Marchesa di San Servolo's suggestion that he should in the meantime use Beach Path, but cannot consent to do so except in the exercise of his right. He will therefore not use Beach Path during the ensuing week."

"And now to pave the way for my proposal!" he thought. For the proposal, which had assumed a position so important in the relations between the Marchesa and himself, was to be of such a nature that a grave question arose how best the way should be paved for it.

The obvious course was to set his spies to work — he could command plenty of

friendly help among the Nab Grange garrison — learn the Marchesa's probable movements, throw himself in her way, contrive an acquaintance, make himself as pleasant as he could, establish relations of amity, of cordiality, even of friendship and of intimacy. That might prepare the way, and incline her to accept the proposal — to take the jest — it was little more in hard reality — in the spirit in which he put it forward, and so to end her resistance.

That seemed the reasonable method — the plain and rational line of advance. Accordingly Lynoorough disliked and distrusted it. He saw another way — more full of risk, more hazardous in its result, making an even greater demand on his confidence in himself, perhaps also on the qualities with which his imagination credited the Marchesa. But, on the other hand, this alternative

was far richer in surprise, in dash — as it seemed to him, in gallantry and a touch of romance. It was far more medieval, more picturesque, more in keeping with the actual proposal itself. For the actual proposal was one which, Lynborough flattered himself, might well have come from a powerful yet chivalrous baron of old days to a beautiful queen who claimed a suzerainty which not her power, but only her beauty, could command or enforce.

"It suits my humor, and I'll do it!" he said. "She sha'n't see me, and I won't see her. The first she shall hear from me shall be the proposal; the first time we meet shall be on the twenty-fourth — or never! A week from to-day — the twenty-fourth."

Now the twenty-fourth of June is, as all the world knows (or an almanac will inform

the heathen), the Feast of St. John Baptist also called Midsummer Day.

So he disappeared from the view of Nab Grange and the inhabitants thereof. He never left his own grounds; even within them he shunned the public road; his beloved sea-bathing he abandoned. Nay, more, he strictly charged Roger Wilbraham, who often during this week of armistice went to play golf or tennis at the Grange, to say nothing of him; the same instructions were laid on Stabb in case on his excursions amidst the tombs, he should meet any member of the Marchesa's party. So far as the thing could be done, Lord Lynborough obliterated himself.

It was playing a high stake on a risky hand. Plainly it assumed an interest in himself on the part of the Marchesa — an interest so strong that absence and mystery

(if perchance he achieved a flavor of that attraction!) would foster and nourish it more than presence and friendship could conduce to its increase. She might think nothing about him during the week! Impossible surely — with all that had gone before, and with his proposal to come at the end! But if it were so — why, so he was content. "In that case, she's a woman of no imagination, of no taste in the picturesque," he said.

For five days the Marchesa gave no sign, no clue to her feelings which the anxious watchers could detect. She did indeed suffer Colonel Wenman to depart all forlorn, most unsuccessful and uncomforted — save by the company of his brother-in-arms, Captain Irons; and he was not cheerful either, having failed notably in certain designs on Miss Dufaure which he had been pursuing,

but whereunto more pressing matters have not allowed of attention being given. But Lord Lynborough she never mentioned — not to Miss Gilletson, nor even to Norah. She seemed to have regained her tranquillity; her wrath at least was over; she was very friendly to all the ladies; she was markedly cordial to Roger Wilbraham on his visits. But she asked him nothing of Lord Lynborough — and, if she ever looked from the window toward Scarsmoor Castle, none — not even her observant maid — saw her do it.

Yet Cupid was in the Grange — and very busy. There were signs, not to be misunderstood, that Violet had not for handsome Stillford the scorn she had bestowed on unfortunate Irons; and Roger, humbly and distantly worshiping the Marchesa, deeming her far as a queen beyond his reach,

rested his eyes and solaced his spirit with the less awe-inspiring charms, the more accessible comradeship, of Norah Mountliffey. Norah, as her custom was, flirted hard, yet in her delicate fashion. Though she had not begun to ask herself about the end yet, she was well amused, and by no means insensible to Roger's attractions. Only she was preoccupied with Helena — and Lord Lynborough. Till that riddle was solved, she could not turn seriously to her own affairs.

On the night of the twenty-second she walked with the Marchesa in the gardens of the Grange after dinner. Helena was very silent; yet to Norah the silence did not seem empty. Over against them, on its high hill, stood Scarsmoor Castle. Roger had dined with them, but had now gone back.

Suddenly — and boldly — Norah spoke.

"Do you see those three lighted windows on the ground floor at the left end of the house? That's his library, Helena. He sits there in the evening. Oh, I do wonder what he's been doing all this week!"

"What does it matter?" asked the Marchesa coldly.

"What will he propose, do you think?"

"Mr. Stillford thinks he may offer to pay me some small rent — more or less nominal — for a perpetual right — and that, if he does, I'd better accept."

"That'll be rather a dull ending to it all."

"Mr. Stillford thinks it would be a favorable one for me."

"I don't believe he means to pay you money. It'll be something" — she paused a moment — "something prettier than that."

"What has prettiness to do with it, you child? With a right of way?"

"Prettiness has to do with you, though, Helena. You don't suppose he thinks only of that wretched path?"

The flush came on the Marchesa's cheek.

"He can hardly be said to have seen me," she protested.

"Then look your best when he does — for I'm sure he's dreamed of you."

"Why do you say that?"

Norah laughed. Because he's a man who takes a lot of notice of pretty women — and he took so very little notice of me. That's why I think so, Helena."

The Marchesa made no comment on the reason given. But now — at last and undoubtedly — she looked across at the windows of Scarsmoor.

"We shall come to some business arrangement, I suppose — and then it'll all be over," she said.

All over? The trouble and the enmity — the defiance and the fight — the excitement and the fun? The duel would be stayed, the combatants and their seconds would go their various ways across the diverging tracks of this great dissevering world. All would be over!

"Then we shall have time to think of something else!" the Marchesa added.

Norah smiled discreetly. Was not that something of an admission?

In the library at Scarsmoor Lynborough was inditing the proposal which he intended to submit by his ambassadors on the morrow.

Chapter Twelve

AN EMBASSAGE

The Marchesa's last words to Lady Norah betrayed the state of her mind. While the question of the path was pending, she had been unable to think of anything else; until it was settled she could think of nobody except of the man in whose hands the settlement lay. Whether Lynborough attracted or repelled, he at least occupied and filled her thoughts. She had come to recognize where she stood and to face the position. Stillford's steady pessimism left her no hope from an invocation of the law; Lynborough's dexterity and resource promised her no abiding victory — at best only precarious

temporary successes — in a private continuance of the struggle. Worst of all — whilst she chafed or wept, he laughed! Certainly not to her critical friends, hardly even to her proud self, would she confess that she lay in her antagonist's mercy; but the feeling of that was in her heart. If so he could humiliate her sorely.

Could he spare her? Or would he? Try how she might, it was hard to perceive how he could spare her without abandoning his right. That she was sure he would not do; all she heard of him, every sharp intuition of him which she had, the mere glimpse of his face as he passed by on Sandy Nab, told her that.

But if he consented to pay a small — a nominal — rent, would not her pride be spared? No. That would be victory for him; she would be compelled to surrender what

she had haughtily refused, in return for something which she did not want and which was of no value. If that were a cloak for her pride, the fabric of it was terribly threadbare. Even such concession as lay in such an offer she had wrung from him by setting his friends against him; would that incline him to tenderness? The offer might leave his friends still unreconciled; what comfort was that to her when once the fight and the excitement of countering blow with blow were done — when all was over? And it was more likely that what seemed to her cruel would seem to Stabb and Roger reasonable — men had a terribly rigid sense of reason in business matters. They would return to their allegiance; her friends would be ranged on the same side; she would be alone — alone in humiliation and defeat. From that fate in the end only Lynborough

himself could rescue her; only the man who threatened her with it could avert it. And how could even he, save by a surrender which he would not make? Yet if he found out a way?

The thought of that possibility — though she could devise or imagine no means by which it might find accomplishment — carried her toward Lynborough in a rush of feeling. The idea — never wholly lost even in her moments of anger and dejection — came back — the idea that all the time he had been playing a game, that he did not want the wounds to be mortal, that in the end he did not hate. If he did not hate, he would not desire to hurt. But he desired to win. Could he win without hurting? Then there was a reward for him — applause for his cleverness, and gratitude for his chivalry.

Stretching out her arms toward Scarsmoor

Castle, she vowed that according to his deed she could hate or love Lord Lynborough. The next day was to decide that weighty question.

The fateful morning arrived — the last day of the armistice — the twenty-third. The ladies were sitting on the lawn after breakfast when Stillford came out of the house with a quick step and an excited air.

"Marchesa," he said, "the Embassy has arrived! Stabb and Wilbraham are at the front door, asking an audience of you. They bring the proposal!"

The Marchesa laid down her book; Miss Gilletson made no effort to conceal her agitation.

"Why didn't they come by the path?" cried Norah.

"They couldn't very well; Lynborough's sent them in a carriage — with postilions

and four horses," Stillford answered gravely. "The postilions appear to be amused, but the Ambassadors are exceedingly solemn."

The Marchesa's spirits rose. If the piece were to be a comedy, she could play her part! The same idea was in Stillford's mind. "He can't mean to be very unpleasant if he plays the fool like this," he said, looking round on the company with a smile.

"Admit the Ambassadors!" cried the Marchesa gaily.

The Ambassadors were ushered on to the lawn. They advanced with a gravity befitting the occasion, and bowed low to the Marchesa. Roger carried a roll of paper of impressive dimensions. Stillford placed chairs for the Ambassadors and, at a sign from the Marchesa, they seated themselves.

"What is your message?" asked the Marchesa. Suddenly nervousness and fear

laid hold of her again; her voice shook a little.

"We don't know," answered Stabb. "Give me the document, Roger."

Roger Wilbraham handed him the scroll.

"We are charged to deliver this to your Excellency's adviser, and to beg him to read it to you in our presence." He rose, delivered the scroll into Stillford's hands, and returned, majestic in his bulk, to his seat.

"You neither of you know what's in it?" the Marchesa asked.

They shook their heads.

The Marchesa took hold of Norah's hand and said quietly, "Please read it to us, Mr. Stillford. I should like you all to hear."

"That was also Lord Lynborough's desire," said Roger Wilbraham.

Stillford unrolled the paper. It was all in Lynborough's own hand — written large

and with fair flourishes. In mockery of the institution he hated, he had cast it in a form which at all events aimed at being legal; too close scrutiny on that score perhaps it would not abid successfully.

"Silence while the document is read!" said Stillford; and he proceeded to read it in a clear and deliberate voice:

" 'Sir Ambrose Athelstan Caverly, Baronet, Baron Lynborough of Lynborough in the County of Dorset and of Scarsmoor in the County of Yorkshire, unto her Excellency Helena Vittoria Maria Antonia, Marchesa di San Servolo, and unto All to whom these Presents Come, Greeting. Whereas the said Lord Lynborough and his predecessors in title have been ever entitled as of right to pass and repass along the path called Beach Path leading across the lands of Nab Grange from the road bounding the

same on the west to the seashore on the east thereof, and to use the said path by themselves, their agents and servants, at their pleasure, without let or interference from any person or persons whatsoever ——— ' "

Stillford paused and looked at the Marchesa. The document did not begin in a conciliatory manner. It asserted the right to use Beach Path in the most uncompromising way.

"Go on," commanded the Marchesa, a little flushed, still holding Norah's hand.

" 'And Whereas the said Lord Lynborough is desirous that his rights as above defined shall receive the recognition of the said Marchesa, which recognition has hitherto been withheld and refused by the said Marchesa: And Whereas great and manifold troubles have arisen from such refusal: And Whereas the said Lord Lynborough is

desirous of dwelling in peace and amity with the said Marchesa ——— ' "

"There, Helena, you see he is!" cried Norah triumphantly.

"I really must not be interrupted," Stillford protested. " 'Now Therefore the said Lord Lynborough, moved thereunto by divers considerations and in chief by his said desire to dwell in amity and good-will, doth engage and undertake that, in consideration of his receiving a full, gracious, and amicable recognition of his right from the said Marchesa, he shall and will, year by year and once a year, to wit on the Feast of St. John Baptist, also known as Midsummer Day ——— ' "

"Why, that's to-morrow!" exclaimed Violet Dufaure.

Once more Stillford commanded silence. The Terms of Peace were not to be rudely

interrupted just as they were reaching the most interesting point. For up to now nothing had come except a renewed assertion of Lynborough's right!

" 'That is to say the twenty-fourth day of June — repair in his own proper person, with or without attendants as shall seem to him good, to Nab Grange or such other place as may then and on each occasion be the abode and residence of the said Marchesa, and shall and will present himself in the presence of the said Marchesa at noon. And that he then shall and will do homage to the said Marchesa for such full, gracious, and amicable recognition as above mentioned by falling on his knee and kissing the hand of the said Marchesa. And if the said Lord Lynborough shall wilfully or by neglect omit so to present himself and so to pay his homage on any such Feast of St.

John Baptist, then his said right shall be of no effect and shall be suspended (And he hereby engages not to exercise the same) until he shall have purged his contempt or neglect by performing his homage on the next succeeding Feast. Provided Always that the said Marchesa shall and will, a sufficient time before the said Feast in each year, apprise and inform the said Lord Lynborough of her intended place of residence, in default whereof the said Lord Lynborough shall not be bound to pay his homage and shall suffer no diminution of his right by reason of the omission thereof. Provided Further and Finally that whensoever the said Lord Lynborough shall duly and on the due date as in these Presents stipulated present himself at Nab Grange or elsewhere the residence for the time being of the said Marchesa, and claim to be

admitted to the presence of the said Marchesa and to perform his homage as herein prescribed and ordered, the said Marchesa shall not and will not, on any pretext or for any cause whatsoever, deny or refuse to accept the said homage so duly proffered, but shall and will in all gracious condescension and neighborly friendship extend and give her hand to the said Lord Lynborough, to the end and purpose that, he rendering and she accepting his homage in all mutual trust and honorable confidence, Peace may reign between Nab Grange and Scarsmoor Castle so long as they both do stand. In Witness whereof the said Lord Lynborough has affixed his name on the Eve of the said Feast of St. John Baptist.

LYNBOROUGH.' "

Stillford ended his reading, and handed the scroll to the Marchesa with a bow.

She took it and looked at Lynborough's signature. Her cheeks were flushed, and her lips struggled not to smile. The rest were silent. She looked at Stillford, who smiled back at her and drew from his pocket — a stylographic pen.

"Yes," she said, and took it.

She wrote below Lynborough's name:

"In Witness whereof, in a desire for peace and amity, in all mutual trust and honorable confidence, the said Marchesa has affixed her name on this same Eve of the said Feast of St. John Baptist.

HELENA DI SAN SERVOLO."

She handed it back to Stillford. "Let it dry in the beautiful sunlight," she said.

The Ambassadors rose to their feet. She rose too and went over to Stabb with outstretched hands. A broad smile spread over Stabb's spacious face. "It's just like

Ambrose," he said to her as he took her hands. "He gets what he wants — but in the prettiest way!"

She answered him in a low voice: "A very knightly way of saving a foolish woman's pride." She raised her voice. "Bid Lord Lynborough — aye, Sir Ambrose Athelstan Caverly, Baron Lynborough, attend here at Nab Grange to pay his homage to-morrow at noon." She looked round on them all, smiling now openly, the red in her cheeks all triumphant over her olive hue. "Say I will give him private audience to receive his homage and to ask his friendship." With that the Marchesa departed, somewhat suddenly, into the house.

Amid much merriment and reciprocal congratulations the Ambassadors were honorably escorted back to their coach and four.

"Keep your eye on the Castle to-night," Roger Wilbraham whispered to Norah as he pressed her hand.

They drove off, Stillford leading a gay "Hurrah!"

At night indeed Scarsmoor Castle was a sight to see. Every window of its front blazed with light; rockets and all manner of amazing bright devices rose to heaven. All Fillby turned out to see the show; all Nab Grange was in the garden looking on.

All save Helena herself. She had retreated to her own room; there she sat and watched alone. She was in a fever of feeling and could not rest. She twisted one hand round the other, she held up before her eyes the hand which was destined to receive homage on the morrow. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks flushed, her red lips trembled.

"Alas, how this man knows his way to my heart!" she sighed.

The blaze at Scarsmoor Castle died down. A kindly darkness fell. Under its friendly cover she kissed her hand to the Castle, murmuring "To-morrow!"

Chapter Thirteen

THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST

"As there's a heaven above us," wrote Lynborough that same night — having been, one would fain hope, telepathically conscious of the hand-kissing by the red lips, of the softly breathed "To-morrow!" (for if he were not, what becomes of Love's Magic?) — "As there's a heaven above us, I have succeeded! Her answer is more than a consent — it's an appreciation. The rogue knew how she stood: she is haughtily, daintily grateful. Does she know how near she drove me to the abominable thing? Almost had I — I, Ambrose Caverly — issued a writ! I should never, in all my life, have got over

the feeling of being a bailiff! She has saved me by the rightness of her taste. 'Knightly' she called it to old Cromlech. Well, that was in the blood — it had been my own fault if I had lost it, no credit of mine if to some measure I have it still. But to find the recognition! I have lit up the country-side to-night to celebrate that rare discovery.

"Rare — yes — yet not doubted. I knew it of her. I believe that I have broken all records — since the Renaissance at least. Love at first sight! Where's the merit in that? Given the sight be fine enough (a thing that I pray may not admit of doubt in the case of Helena), it is no exploit; it is rather to suffer the inevitable than to achieve the great. But unless the sight of a figure a hundred yards away — and of a back fifty — is to count against me as a practical inspection, I am so supremely lucky as never

to have seen her! I have made her for myself — a few tags of description, a noting of the effect on Roger and on Cromlech, mildly (and very unimaginatively) aided my work, I admit — but for the most part and in all essentials, she, as I love her (for of course I love her, or no amount of Feast of St. John Baptist should have moved me from my path — take that for literal or for metaphorical as ye will!) — is of my own craftsmanship — work of my heart and brain, wrought just as I would have her — as I knew, through all delightful wanderings, that some day she must come to me.

"Think then of my mood for to-morrow! With what feelings do I ring the bell (unless perchance it be a knocker)! With what sensations accost the butler! With what emotions enter the presence! Because if by chance I am wrong —! Upon which

awful doubt arises the question whether, if I be wrong, I can go back. I am plaguily the slave of putting the thing as prettily as it can be put (Thanks, Cromlech, for giving me the adverb — not so bad a touch for a Man of Tombs!), and, on my soul, I have put that homage of mine so prettily that one who was prudent would have addressed it to none other than a married lady — *vivente marito*, be it understood. But from my goddess her mortal mate is gone — and to explain — nay, not to explain (which would indeed tax every grace of style) — but to let it appear that the homage lingers, abides, and is confined within the letter of the bond — that would seem scarce 'knightly.' Therefore, being (as all tell me) more of a fool than most men, and (as I soberly hope) not less of a gentleman, I stand thus. I love the Image I have made

out of dim distant sight, prosaic shreds of catalogued description, a vividly creating mind, and — to be candid — the absolute necessity of amusing myself in the country. But the Woman I am to see to-morrow? Is she the Image? I shall know in the first moment of our encounter. If she is, all is well for me — for her it will be just a question of her dower of heavenly venturousness. If she is not — in my humble judgment, you, Ambrose Caverly, having put the thir with so excessive a prettiness, shall for you art's sake perish — you must, in short, if you would end this thing in the manner (creditable to yourself, Ambrose!) in which it has hitherto been conducted, willy-nilly, hot or cold, confirmed in divine dreams or slapped in the face by disenchanting fact — within a brief space of time, propose marriage to this lady. If there be any other course,

the gods send me scent of it this night! But if she should refuse? Reckon not on that. For the more she fall short of her Image, the more will she grasp at an outward showing of triumph — and the greatest outward triumph would not be in refusal.

"In my human weakness I wish that — just for once — I had seen her! But in the strong spirit of the wine of life — whereof I have been and am an inveterate and most incurable bibber — I rejoice in that wonderful moment of mine to-morrow — when the door of the shrine opens, and I see the goddess before whom my offering must be laid. Be she giant or dwarf, be she black or white, have she hair or none — by the powers, if she wears a sack only, and is well advised to stick close to that, lest casting it should be a change for the worse — in any event the offering must be made. Even so the

Prince in the tales, making his vows to the Beast and not yet knowing if his spell shall transform it to the Beauty! In my stronger moments, so would I have it. Years of life shall I live in that moment to-morrow! If it end ill, no human being but myself shall know. If it end well, the world is not great enough to hold, nor the music of its spheres melodious enough to sound, my triumph!"

It will be observed that Lord Lynborough, though indeed no novice in the cruel and tender passion, was appreciably excited on the Eve of the Feast of St. John Baptist. In view of so handsome a response, the Marchesa's kiss of the hand and her murmured "To-morrow" may pass excused of forwardness.

It was, nevertheless, a gentleman to all seeming most cool and calm who presented

himself at the doors of Nab Grange at eleven fifty-five the next morning. His Ambassadors had come in magnificence; humbly he walked — and not by Beach Path, since his homage was not yet paid — but round by the far-stretching road and up the main avenue most decorously. Stabb and Roger had cut across by the path — holding the Marchesa's leave and license so to do — and had joined an excited group which sat on chairs under sheltering trees.

"I wish she hadn't made the audience private!" said Norah Mountliffey.

"If ever a keyhole were justifiable —" sighed Violet Dufaure.

"My dear, I'd box your ears myself," Miss Gilletson brusquely interrupted.

The Marchesa sat in a high arm-chair, upholstered in tarnished fading gold. The sun from the window shone on her hair;

her face was half in shadow. She rested her head on her left; hand the right lay on her knee. It was stripped of any ring — unadorned white. Her cheeks were pale — the olive reigned unchallenged; her lips were set tight, her eyes downcast. She made no movement when Lord Lynborough entered.

He bowed low, but said nothing. He stood opposite to her some two yards away. The clock ticked. It wanted still a minute before noon struck. That was the minute of which Lynborough had raved and dreamed the night before. He had the fruit of it in full measure.

The first stroke of twelve rang silvery from the clock. Lynborough advanced and fell upon his knee. She did not lift her eyes, but slowly raised her hand from her knee. He placed his hand under it, pressing it a

little upward and bowing his head to meet it half-way in its ascent. She felt his lips lightly brush the skin. His homage for Beach Path and his right therein was duly paid.

Slowly he rose to his feet; slowly her eyes turned upward to his face. It was ablaze with a great triumph; the fire seemed to spread to her cheeks.

"It's better than I dreamed or hoped," he murmured.

"What? To have peace between us? Yes, it's good."

"I have never seen your face before." She made no answer. "Nor you mine?" he asked.

"Once on Sandy Nab you passed by me. You didn't notice me — but, yes, I saw you." Her eyes were steadily on him now; the flush had ceased to deepen, nay, had re-

ceded, but abode still, tingeing the olive of her cheeks.

"I have rendered my homage," he said.

"It is accepted." Suddenly tears sprang to her eyes. "And you might have been so cruel to me!" she whispered.

"To you? To you who carry the power of a world in your face?"

The Marchesa was confused — as was, perhaps, hardly unnatural.

"There are other things, besides gates and walls, and Norah's head, that you jump over, Lord Lynborough."

"I lived a life while I stood waiting for the clock to strike. I have tried for life before — in that minute I found it." He seemed suddenly to awake as though from a dream. "But I beg your pardon. I have paid my dues. The bond gives me no right to linger."

She rose with a light laugh — yet it

sounded nervous. "Is it good-by till next St. John Baptist's day?"

"You would see me walking on Beach Bath day by day."

"I never call it Beach Path."

"May it now be called — Helena's?"

"Or will you stay and lunch with me to-day? And you might even pay homage again — say to-morrow — or — or some day in the week."

"Lunch, most certainly. That commits me to nothing. Homage, Marchesa, is quite another matter."

"Your chivalry is turning to bargaining, Lord Lynborough."

"It was never anything else," he answered. "Homage is rendered in payment — that's why one says 'Whereas.'" His keen eager eyes of hazel raised once more the flood of subdued crimson in her face. "For every

recognition of a right of mine, I will pay you homage according to the form prescribed for St. John Baptist's Feast."

"Of what other rights do you ask recognition?"

"There might be the right of welcoming you at Scarsmoor to-morrow?"

She made him a little curtsy. "It is accorded — on the prescribed terms, my lord."

"That will do for the twenty-fifth. There might be the right of escorting you home from Scarsmoor by the path called — Helena's?"

"On the prescribed terms it is your lordship's."

"What then of the right to see you daily, and day by day?"

"If your leisure serves, my lord, I will endeavor to adjust mine — so long as we both remain at Fillby. But so that the homage is paid!"

"But if you go away?"

"I'm bound to tell you of my whereabouts only on St. John Baptist's Feast."

"The right to know it on other days — would that be recognized in return for a homage, Marchesa?"

"One homage for so many letters?"

"I had sooner there were no letters — and daily homages."

"You take too many obligations — and too lightly."

"For every one I gain the recognition of a right."

"The richer you grow in rights then, the harder you must work!"

"I would have so many rights accorded me as to be no better than a slave!" cried Lynborough. "Yet, if I have not one, still I have nothing."

She spoke no word, but looked at him

long and searchingly. She was not nervous now, but proud. Her look bade him weigh words; they had passed beyond the borders of merriment, beyond the bandying of challenges. Yet her eyes carried no prohibition; it was a warning only. She interposed no conventional check, no plea for time. She laid on him the responsibility for his speech; let him remember that he owed her homage.

They grew curious and restless on the lawn; the private audience lasted long, the homage took much time in paying.

"A marvelous thing has come to me," said Lynborough, speaking slower than his wont, "and with it a great courage. I have seen my dream. This morning I came here not knowing whether I should see it. I don't speak of the face of my dream-image only, though I could speak till next St. John's

Day upon that. I speak to a soul. I think our souls have known one another longer, aye, and better than our faces."

"Yes, I think it is so," she said quietly. "Yet who can tell so soon?"

"There's a great gladness upon me because my dream came true."

"Who can tell so soon?" she asked again. "It's strange to speak of it.'

"It may be that some day — yes, some day soon — in return for the homage of my lips on your hand, I would ask the recognition of my lip's right on your cheek."

She came up to him and laid her hand on his arm. "Suffer me a little while, my lord," she said. "You've swept into my life like a whirlwind; you would carry me by assault as though I were a rebellious city. Am I to be won before ever I am wooed?"

"You sha'n't lack wooing," he said quick-

ly. "Yet haven't I wooed you already — as well in my quarrel as in my homage, in our strife as in the end of it?"

"I think so, yes. Yet suffer me a little still."

"If you doubt —" he cried.

"I don't think I doubt. I linger." She gave her hand into his. "It's strange, but I cannot doubt."

Lynborough sank again upon his knee and paid his homage. As he rose, she bent ever so slightly toward him; delicately he kissed her cheek.

"I pray you," she whispered, "use gently what you took with that."

"Here's a heart to my heart, and a spirit to my spirit — and a glad venture to us both!"

"Come on to the lawn now, but tell them nothing."

"Save that I have paid my homage, and received the recognition of my right?"

"That, if you will — and that your path is to be — henceforward — Helena's."

"I hope to have no need to travel far on the Feast of St. John!" cried Lynborough.

They went out on the lawn. Nothing was asked, and nothing told, that day. In truth there appeared to be no need. For it seems as though Love were not always invisible, nor the twang of his bow so faint as to elude the ear. With joyous blood his glad wounds are red, and who will may tell the sufferers. Sympathy too lends insight; your fellow-sufferer knows your plight first. There were fellow-sufferers on the lawn that day — to whom, as to all good lovers, here's God-speed.

She went with him in the afternoon through the gardens, over the sunk fence,

across the meadows, till they came to the path. On it they walked together.

"So is your right recognized, my lord," she said.

"We will walk together on Helena's Path," he answered, "until it leads us — still together — to the Boundless Sea."

THE END